

Composting

----- - Top Tips and Facts - -----



Composting was first mentioned in the bible, so those who get involved are in good company! It can be traced to around 2,000 years ago when roman farmer and scientist, Marcus Cato, noticed its soil enhancing abilities.

Composting helps your garden by supplying it with key nutrients which have been taken out through weeding, grass cutting or digging up potatoes. Composting helps improve soil structure and increase its fertility.

Composting helps the environment by reducing the amount of rubbish going into your rubbish bin and therefore into the landfill.

Composting is easier than you think. It takes about two months to get home compost ready to spread on your garden and there are very few things which can't be composted.

What **CAN** be composted

- Lawn clippings
- Shredded stalks and hedge clippings
- Cut flowers
- Vegetable and fruit scraps
- Tea bags, leaves and coffee grounds
- Hair
- Egg shells
- Shredded thin Cardboard,
e.g. cardboard egg boxes, toilet roll tubes

What **CANNOT** be composted

- Diseased plants
 - Plastics, glass & other non-organics
 - Cooked food including meat & fish
 - Weeds are best avoided
 - Coloured glossy paper
 - Pet droppings
 - Laminated cardboard
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Questions Answered

1. How long does it take to make compost?

Composting can take weeks or months, depending on how much air and moisture the compost receives. By turning the compost regularly to incorporate air you should make compost in 3-6 months. In winter it will take longer because cold weather slows the process down.

2. Why does compost turn wet and slimy?

Usually because you have put in too much soft material, grass clippings and vegetable peelings etc. By adding chopped up twigs and wood chips and some shredded or crumpled newspaper you will give the compost a better texture.

How to get started

1. Choose a composting bin, you can either make one your self or buy one from a gardening centre, Make sure the bin has a lid to stop the compost becoming water logged when it rains
2. Place your "*green waste*" into the compost bin. The more the material is chopped up the quicker the compost will be produced.
3. Spreading a little "*already done*" compost will help the compost to get going or you can buy compost accelerants from garden centres
4. Keep the compost pile moist, it should be damp to the touch, but not wet.
5. Leave the pile for about a week, the compost will begin to bake and get warm, this is part of the natural rotting process.
6. Add air to the pile by stirring or turning with a fork.
7. The pile will begin to reduce in size, this is a good sign that the compost is being formed. If the compost begins to go slimy, add some cardboard as this will add fibre.
8. If you mix the pile every week, it should be ready in about two months. If you don't turn the mix it may take up to twelve months to form compost.
9. Your compost should look a dark brown colour and be crumbly in texture.
10. Mix the compost into the soil and watch your plants grow.

Top Tips

1. Know what can and can't be composted.

- Basically everything except: cooked food, meat or fish, plastics or glass, coal ash, cat and dog waste, disposable nappies or glossy magazines.

2. Compost materials fall into four categories from the '*hotter rotters*' which activate the compost, to '*slow cookers*' which bulk up the heap and rot slowly.

- "*Hotter Rotters*" include material such as grass cuttings, which should be added to other compostable items like paper towels and toilet tubes. Tea bags, vegetable peelings and old flowers are vital ingredients in your compost heap
- '*Slow Cookers*' such as wood shavings, bulk up the heap.

3. Buy a guinea pig.

- Pet waste from dogs and cats, cannot be used on the compost heap.
- Hamsters are more suitable but rarely produce enough.
- Guinea pigs, on the other hand, will eat the weeds and turn them into prime compost material very quickly!

4. Never put your compost heap/bin on concrete or paving, and never place it in direct sunlight.

The best place for it is in the shade and away from the house.

5. If your compost bin is sited directly into soil then worms will crawl up inside and speed up the maturity of your compost heap.

Worms feed off food waste such as vegetable peelings and convert it into compost much quicker.