

# Start home composting today

There are lots of everyday waste items that can be composted. Here's an example of some of the things you CAN add to your compost bin:

## 'GREENS'

- Grass cuttings
- Vegetable peelings
- Fruit scraps (including citrus peel)
- Nettle and comfrey leaves
- Young annual weeds
- Old flowers and bedding plants
- Tea bags
- Rhubarb leaves
- Coffee grounds

## 'BROWNS'

- Cardboard
- Woody prunings
- Autumn leaves
- Egg boxes
- Newspaper
- Toilet and kitchen roll tubes
- Wood ash
- Egg shells
- Junk mail
- Vacuum bag contents
- Tissues and paper towels (unless they have been in contact with meats, fats or oils)

## 'GREENS' and 'BROWNS'

- Hay
- Vegetarian pet bedding



# Master Composters here to help

Master composters are volunteers who spend time promoting home composting in their local community, encouraging householders to take up composting and ensuring those already composting continue to do so effectively.

To find out whether there are Master Composters in your area email [enquiries@gardenorganic.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@gardenorganic.org.uk)

# Why Compost at home?



Composting at home is simple to do, produces something for free and helps save time, money and the planet!

## For the environment...

Making compost contributes towards a cleaner environment;

- cuts down on waste being sent for disposal
- prevents production of harmful gases
- reduces reliance on peat

## For the garden...

Compost, a rich soil-like material, works wonders around the garden;

- lightens heavy soils
- helps light soils hold more water
- feeds plants
- helps control diseases

## For you...

Composting and gardening are recognised by GPs as physical activities that can improve your health.



# Getting the mix right

50%	50%
Brown materials	Green materials
Carbon rich	Nitrogen rich

'Green' items contain bacteria that generates the initial heat that is required by the process. A healthy compost bin is a living ecosystem. By keeping a good mix of green and brown material you will provide the perfect conditions for a variety of mini-beasts, and can let them do all of the hard work.

First day - green and brown items visible; egg shells, vegetable peelings, crunched up cardboard, grass cuttings, prunings etc.



After a couple of months - small clumps of green material are still visible, brown items still showing but starting to decompose and looking quite damp, fruit flies and slugs and worms may also be present.

After a couple of weeks - looking a bit moist, the level will keep dropping and air-pockets will be letting it breathe.



After 6-12 months - black and crumbly material, no smell, some woody brown material and egg shells still visible.



## Why do I need to compost my peelings when they break down in landfill anyway?

In reality organic waste that is sent to landfill is unable to decompose properly because, squashed under all the other waste, it doesn't have access to any air. So instead methane, a powerful greenhouse gas is produced which contributes to global warming. When you compost your organic waste at home you are not only providing your garden with a limitless soil improver for plants and vegetables, but you are doing your bit to reduce global warming too!



# The natural composting process

The decomposition of organic (living) materials in compost has five main stages. Each stage involves the work of different organisms that are adapted to the specific conditions in the compost heap at that point. They come and go of their own accord.

1. Weeds, grass, kitchen scraps and other organic material you put in a compost bin will already have plenty of bacteria living on them. These bacteria start the decomposing process.



2. Bacteria and other micro-organisms multiply rapidly as they feed. Larger creatures such as insects and worms move in and start to feed on the decomposing organic material, breaking it into smaller and smaller pieces. All this activity releases energy as heat and the heap may begin to feel warm if a lot of material has been added at once.

3. This stage sees the most intense microbial activity with temperatures at their highest. The heat generated may be enough to kill weed seeds, pests and disease organisms. At this stage the volume of the stuff you put in the bin will be consumed and disappear at a dramatic rate.

4. All the creatures involved in composting need air to survive. At this stage air and food supplies will be running low and the heap will cool down allowing other bacteria and fungi to move in.

5. The compost will continue to decay slowly and after a period of time it will be ready to use. Don't worry if you find your compost bin full of earthworms, woodlice, ants and so on at this stage. They are part of the process.