

# HOME COMPOSTING

## Perennial Weeds

Persistent and troublesome weeds, like ground elder, couch grass, bindweed and docks, are more difficult to compost but it can be done without a lot of effort. They often have extensive root systems and this means they will have absorbed a lot of valuable nutrients from the soil, so it makes no sense to throw away all this goodness which could easily be recycled and added to the garden. Because they are harder to kill, we need to use different methods to make sure we don't simply spread them around in our gardens.

**Avoid Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) and oxalis species; and notify your local authority if you need to dispose of Japanese Knotweed.**

### Drowning

The quickest way to dispose of perennials is to cram them into a bucket, fill it with water, making sure the weeds can't float above the water level, and cover it. The roots will be drowned in 3 or 4 weeks, so you can then strain off the liquid, using it as a liquid feed [diluted 5 parts water to 1 part feed] and put the dead roots into your Compostabin.

### Dessicating

There are only a few summers when you can use this method, but it's very simple if the weather permits. Lay the roots thinly on a flat surface: concrete slabs, corrugated iron, black plastic, anything to keep the roots off the soil. Over 2 or 3 weeks, the summer sun will make the roots shrivel and dry out, thereby killing them. Then they can safely be added to the Compostabin.

## **Stewing**

Put the weeds in a black plastic bag, mixing in freshly mown grass. Tie a knot in the bag and leave it in a sunny spot. Within a few weeks the entire contents of the bag will turn into a brown, gooey mess. Your stewed weeds can then safely be added to your Compostabin.

## **Picking Out**

You may think that the above methods are too much trouble. You can add all your weeds to the Compostabin, but you should remember that ground elder roots or nettle roots will still be able to cause you grief in 9-12 months when you come to harvest your compost. The roots will still be white (ground elder or bindweed) or yellow (nettles) and so quite obvious; all you need to do is watch out for them, pick them out of the good compost, and return them to the bin. They'll give up after a couple of years.

## **New Zealand Box**

If you have a large garden and need a New Zealand Box as well as a Compostabin, you can safely add perennials to the box, provided you always keep it covered. It takes 2 years to make good compost this way, so the weeds will be inert and composted by then.

(See our leaflet on making a New Zealand box if you think you might need one).