

COMPOSTING WOODY MATERIAL

You need a mix of 'brown', fibrous material with 'green', sappy items to produce good compost.

Fresh woody stems are ideal brown ingredients, but old, dry wood is more difficult to compost and should usually be treated differently.

Shredding

This is the best way to produce small pieces of woodchip that have different uses in the garden.

If you're buying a shredder, choose a more expensive electric one. Small, cheap ones will burn out quickly and can only deal with very thin stems. Domestic shredders normally cope with stems up to 4cm diameter.

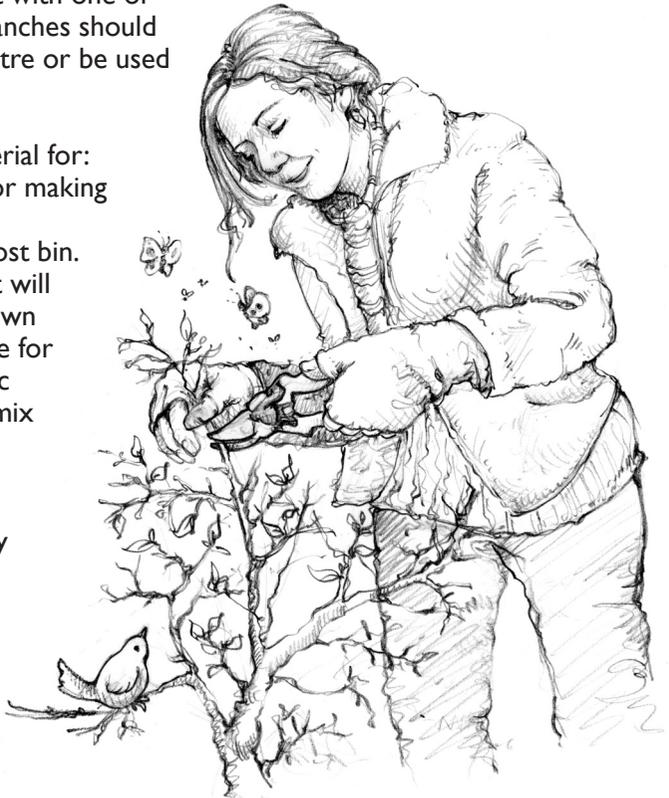
If you only need to shred occasionally, you could hire a machine for a weekend and possibly share the cost with one or two neighbours. Larger branches should be taken to a recycling centre or be used as firewood.

Use shredded woody material for:

- Mulching round shrubs or making paths
- Putting in a home compost bin.

Use only a small amount. It will take longer to compost down

- Bagging and storing some for next summer. ASK Organic have found in trials that a mix of grass clippings and shreds compost down very well. If you have time and space, make a grass bay [see the leaflet on Grass] and mix shreds with grass every time you cut the lawn. Leave for at least 2 years to make rich compost.



Using a rotary mower

The blades will chop up green herbaceous prunings and reduce large amounts of autumn clearing to small piles. Green and brown parts are mixed and will produce very high temperatures, so will compost down quickly.

- Use protective goggles
- Make a pile of prunings on the lawn
- Gently lower the machine onto the pile
- The shredded material will be collected in the grass box
- Compost this or bag up and mix with grass clippings, as described above.

Chopping up

You can use secateurs to chop stems into small pieces. The smaller, the better as they will compost more quickly.

A dead hedge

It's difficult to shred prickly prunings, like rose and holly; gnarled and knotty wood from older trees and shrubs; clematis, honeysuckle and willow with stringy stems that won't shred cleanly.

These items can be put in a dead hedge to rot down slowly and provide a wonderful wildlife-friendly spot.

How to make a dead hedge:

- Choose a secluded part of the garden
- Use stout poles, with a 5-8cm diameter and 2 metres tall
- Make a line of poles with each 45cm apart
- Then make a second line, parallel to the first line, at least 60cm away from it
- Start filling the space with difficult prunings. They will gradually rot down and you can make more space by pressing down.
- You could make the structure look more attractive by weaving willow, clematis or ivy between the poles, creating a basketwork effect.

Conifer prunings, sawdust and wood shavings

These take as much as 5 years to rot down, so don't add them to your compost bin. Either have a special bin or pile for them or use for mulching.

Softwood waste can be quite acidic so use to mulch blueberries, rhododendrons or other acid lovers.

For more information on home composting or to contact us - www.askorganic.co.uk or 01450 860778

ASK Organic, in partnership with Scottish Borders Council, has a Home Composting Display within Woodside Plant Centre, by Ancrum, Jedburgh.



**Waste Aware
Scottish Borders**

For information on Waste and Recycling contact Scottish Borders Council Recycling Team on 0300 100 1800 or www.scotborders.gov.uk/recycling

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