

HOW TO MAKE GOOD COMPOST

Home-made compost feeds your plants and makes them grow well.

It's easy to turn weeds, garden prunings, vegetable peelings and grass clippings into sweet-smelling, friable compost.

Make good compost by:

Keeping your compost **warm**.

- Put your compost bin on soil in a sunny place. Plastic compost units absorb the sun's warmth, so the composting micro organisms, or bacteria, work faster.
- Circular bins are better than square ones because the sun shines directly on most of the bin during the day. The sun can only directly strike 3 sides of a square bin during the day.

Keeping the composting material **moist**

- It should be neither soggy nor dry. Compost bacteria work round the edges of a weed or woody stem, but only where there is a thin film of moisture.

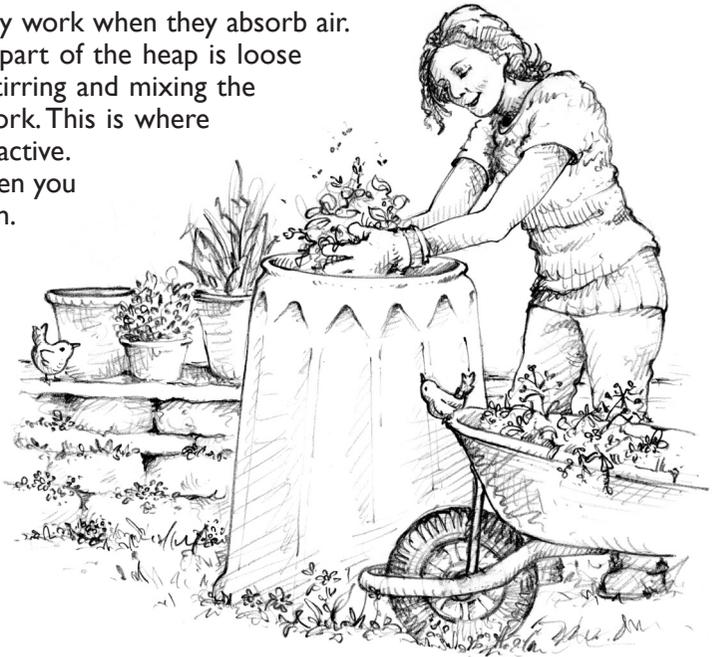
Giving your heap **air**.

- *Aerobic* bacteria only work when they absorb air.

Make sure the upper part of the heap is loose and airy. Do this by stirring and mixing the top 15-20cm with a fork. This is where the bacteria are most active.

You also mix in air when you empty the compost bin.

- Do not make holes round the side of your bin or have slatted sides on a wooden compost bin. The compost at the edge dries out and the air gets nowhere near the centre of the heap, where it's needed.



Have an **equal mix of green and brown material** to make good compost. The brown material absorbs surplus wet from the green, so everything becomes moist.

Green material – wet and rich in nitrogen: annual weeds, fresh green prunings, faded flowers, grass clippings, (if not treated with synthetic chemicals), **raw** kitchen fruit and veg scraps.

Brown material – dry and carbon-rich: paper, card, cardboard egg boxes, leaves, coffee grounds, tea bags, egg shells, woody stalks and stems, prunings, straw, hay, animal manure (not dog or cat), vacuum dust, small amounts of wood ash. (Do not use coal ash, sawdust, wood shavings or woodchip)

Empty your compost bin to keep it working fast

Plastic compost bins should produce good compost in one year. Keep adding material throughout the year. Harvest your compost in the spring:

- Lift the composter up and off the pile
- If you have space, put the bin beside the pile
- Fork the material that isn't ready back into the bin, or make a heap on the ground
- Shovel up the good compost.

If your bin has a hatch, only use it to inspect your compost. Do not try to dig the finished compost out through it.

If you have a 'Komp' bin, remove one of the long plastic pins and swing the sides open, like a door. Then put the rough, unready compost to one side and dig out the good material.

Some extra tips

- Get fine compost by chopping up or shredding the material before putting it into the composter. Micro organisms will break this down quickly.
- Garden topsoil is full of composting bacteria, so sprinkle an occasional handful of soil on top of your compost heap. Soil is the ideal compost activator and it's free.
- Do not try to compost a lot of rootballs or used commercial compost. [see the leaflet: 'Kitchen waste' for one solution]

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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