



HOME COMPOSTING

Grass and Leaves

Grass

Many of us spend more time looking after the lawn than any other part of the garden, and it can receive more synthetic chemicals than elsewhere [despite the risks to children and pets].

Grass as Feed

An easy way to feed the lawn is to remove the grass box on an occasional hot, sunny day, and the mowings will quickly shrivel back into the turf.

Grass as Mulch

Grass also makes an excellent mulch round shrubs and in the veg. garden – even better when you first spread a layer of newspaper on the soil and then cover it with clippings. This needs to be topped up, but grass does keep growing.

Grass in the Compostabin

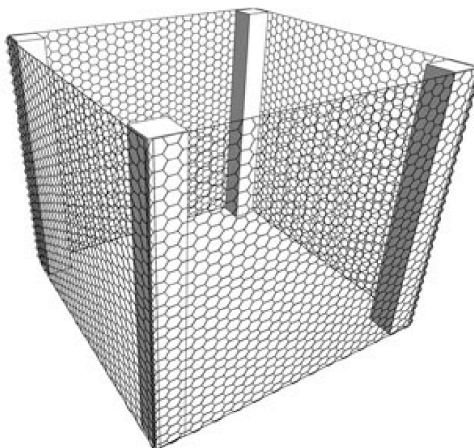
As it rots, grass becomes very hot, and a thin (15cm) layer of this helps to heat up the compost bin. The hotter your heap, the more weed seeds and pathogens will be killed off. Grass balances paper, card and woody material.



A Grass bin

If you still have lots of grass, you can build a special bin for the grass. The secret is to keep it as open and airy as possible.

1. Drive 4 posts into the ground to make a square metre.
2. Staple rabbit fencing round 3 sides, leaving the fourth side loosely attached with cuphooks so it can be opened.
3. Empty the grass into the bin, allowing it to be no more than 15cm deep.
4. Scrumple up sheets of newspaper, mixing these balls with the grass, gradually filling the bin. This way you'll avoid a sour, smelly heap of grass.



Why does this work ?

Grass can become smelly when the bacteria that make compost have no air because the heap is so dense. When you mix in scrumpled paper, the paper soaks up moisture from the grass and creates little air pockets to allow the bacteria to keep on working. You'll have excellent compost, rich in carbon and nitrogen in a couple of years. Why throw it away?

Leaves

Fallen autumn leaves can be collected into a similar box, but don't need a paper mix, and will rot down, making excellent leafmould within a year or two. This can be used as a soil conditioner or can be used instead of peat in a home-made compost mix.

For further information about home composting:



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