

## Composting – How to get started!

The quickest way to start composting in your garden is to get hold of a plastic compost bin. You can buy these from DIY stores for about £30.

There are lots of other composting options including making your own compost bin (check out the **make your own compost bin** factsheet), or paying a bit more for a 'hot composter', which work much quicker than traditional compost bins.



In a traditional bin it will take at least a year to produce compost that is ready to use on your garden.

### Where to put it?

The ideal site for your compost bin is somewhere fairly sunny and sheltered from the wind. Placing it on bare earth will make it easier for worms and the other insects and microorganisms which help to break down your waste into compost, access the bin. If your bin needs to be on slabs or tarmac, that's ok, just add a layer of compost/twigs/leaves to the bottom of the bin before you start adding the rest of your garden waste.

### What can I compost?

Your compost will be best when you add a mixture of what is known as green and brown materials. Green materials contain lots of nitrogen, are soft and break down quick and help keep the compost moist. Brown materials contain lots of carbon, they are drier, break down more slowly and add structure to your compost. You need a 50/50 mix of green and brown materials. Here are some examples of green and brown materials.

Yes Please ✓	No Thanks ✗
<p><b>Garden Waste</b> Weeds Cut flowers Grass clippings</p> <p><b>Food Waste (uncooked)</b> Fruit and veg peelings Egg shells Coffee ground Tea bags</p> <p><b>Household Waste</b> Soft cardboard e.g. toilet/kitchen roll tubes, egg boxes, cereal boxes Paper shredding Woodchips Dustpan or vacuum cleaner contents</p>	<p>Animal waste or bedding Cooked food Fish, meat and bones Plants with diseases Liquid food waste e.g. fat, oil, yogurt Plastic, glass or metal items</p>

### Looking after your compost

Keep adding greens and browns to your compost bin. Every now and then use a garden fork to mix/stir your compost. This will aerate your compost and make sure the microorganisms are able to break down your garden waste.

If your compost seems to dry, add more greens or a little water. If it's got a bit wet or slimy add more browns.

You will know your compost is ready to use when it is dark and crumbly and smells fresh and earthy. It can be a good idea to have two compost bins, one you can add to and the other you can leave to mature.