Composting for gardeners

Working with nature's black gold



garden organic

organic pioneers since 1958



Composting for gardeners

Garden Organic (formerly known as the Henry Doubleday Research Association) is the UK's leading organic growing charity. We have been at the forefront of the organic horticulture movement for more than 60 years with 20,000 members across the UK and overseas.

Dedicated to promoting organic gardening in homes, communities and schools, the charity encourages people to grow in the most sustainable way, and demonstrates the lasting benefits of organic growing to the health and wellbeing of individuals and the environment.

For more information please visit **www.gardenorganic.org.uk**.

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Why make compost?

Compost is nature's black gold. It will help you grow healthy plants. And making it yourself reduces pollution, supports the natural environment, saves money and protects endangered natural habitats. How? By recycling your garden debris and kitchen scraps. It's as simple as that. This book will tell you what to compost, how to make it, and how to use it.

Compost makes your garden grow

Compost, a rich soil-like material, works wonders in the growing area. It:

- lightens and breaks up heavy soils
- bulks up light sandy soils and helps them hold more water
- feeds plants and other vital soil organisms
- helps control diseases

Compost saves you money

Home-made compost helps cut down on buying garden products. It acts as a:

- soil improver
- fertiliser
- mulch
- no need to pay for green waste collection

Compost helps reduce pollution

Making compost contributes towards a cleaner environment. It:

- reduces the need for bonfires
- cuts down on waste sent for disposal
- saves buying manufactured and packaged products

Home-made compost saves wildlife

If you buy compost in bags, you are getting something very different. Many bagged commercial composts still include peat. The extraction of peat is causing the destruction of fragile and ancient habitats, and threatens the rare plants and animals that live there. 94% of the UK's lowland peatbogs have already been damaged or destroyed. Make your own compost and you not only save money, you save these rare wildlife environments.

What can I put into my compost heap?

Put simply, the compost process is the rotting down of organic material. This section gives you some ideas on what, and what not, to add to your compost heap to get the perfect 'mix'.

Some things, like grass mowings and soft young weeds, rot quickly. They work as 'activators', getting the composting started, but on their own will decay to a smelly mess. Older and tougher plant material is slower to rot but gives body to the finished compost.

Woody items decay very slowly; they are best chopped or shredded first.

For best results, use a mixture of types of ingredients listed overleaf. A good rule of thumb is to mix equal amounts of 'green' material with 'brown'. Keeping it moist, using water from a water butt, during a dry period will help the rotting process.



Greens

- comfrey and nettle leaves
- grass cuttings
- poultry manures
- young weeds and any weed foliage (not roots or seeds)
- raw fruit and veg scraps
- old flowers and bedding plants
- vegetable plant remains
- young hedge clippings
- soft prunings

Greens and Browns

- tea leaves and coffee grounds
- straw-based manure
- gerbil, hamster, rabbit and other vegetarian pet bedding

Browns

- old straw
- autumn leaves
- tough hedge clippings
- woody prunings (already shredded)
- sawdust and wood shavings
- wood ash
- cardboard
- paper towels, bags and packaging
- cardboard tubes and egg boxes
- junk mail
- scrunched up newspaper

Do not compost

- meat, fish and dairy products
- cooked food
- coal and coke ash
- cat litter
- dog faeces
- disposable nappies



Items for the compost heap

Autumn leaves



Mow leaves on a lawn to chop and collect them up. This helps them to break down. Add them to the compost heap mixed with grass mowings and other soft green materials. If you have a lot of leaves, stuff them whole or chopped into black plastic sacks to make **leafmould**. Puncture the bags to allow airflow and moisture in and they'll be ready to use after a year or two.

Grass cuttings and other green leaves

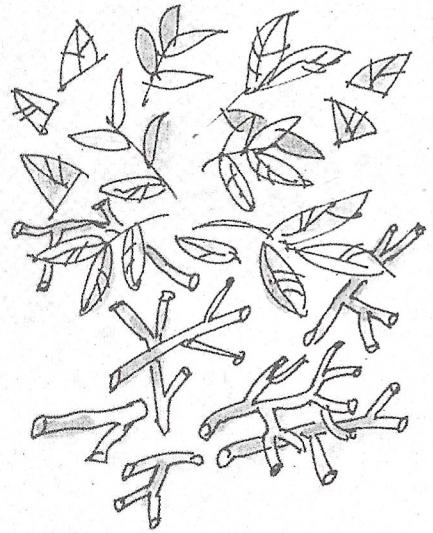
These will turn into a slimy mess unless they are composted together with some browner materials like cardboard, scrunched up newspaper or autumn leaves. Leaves from comfrey and nettle plants are quick to rot and add vital minerals to the heap. You can also add dying foliage from vegetable plants such as beans and brassicas, as well as the foliage from perennial weeds.

Perennial weeds



To kill the roots of perennial weeds such as celandine, buttercup, ground elder and bindweed, you need a very hot compost heap (see *p.13*). In the usual cool domestic heap or bin, you need to take extra action to process their mineral rich roots. Either drown the roots by soaking them in a bucket or black bin for weeks until they have fully rotted – then add the fluid to the heap. Alternatively, shred or mash the roots, mix with grass mowings in a plastic sack, and leave for 6 months until the weeds are no longer recognisable. Then add to the compost heap.

Hedge clippings and prunings



Chop or shred tough prunings and clippings from hedges before adding to a mixed compost heap. If you have large quantities rot them separately; even unshredded they will rot eventually. To do this mix with grass or other activating material, then cover. In anything from a few months to years you will have a coarse mulch which can be used on perennial beds.

Animal manures

Straw-based horse and cattle manure composts well – as does chicken manure. If the manure is mixed with wood shavings it should be left to rot until the shavings are no longer visible. If it is dry, water well and mix with grass mowings or other green activating material.

Paper products

Newspaper can be added to a compost heap as can cardboard, cereal or egg boxes and toilet roll tubes. Always scrunch up flat paper and card to help keep air in the compost heap. This helps the aerobic rotting process.

Kitchen and household waste

Raw fruit, vegetable peelings and uncooked food are good compost ingredients. Plus egg shells, tea leaves and used coffee grounds. Avoid meat, fish, dairy products and cooked food, which are more likely to attract rats and flies, unless you have a specialised composter, such as an enclosed hot composting system.

Cat and dog faeces can contain dangerous pathogens and should not be composted at home. Likewise, coal and coke ash contains many impurities and should not be composted. Wood ash is fine.

Choosing a compost bin and where to put it

Compost can be made in a simple heap on the ground. However, most people use some form of compost container. This looks neater and easier to manage. Compost bins can be home-made or purchased, low cost or expensive – the choice is yours. They can be made of wood, plastic or other materials, preferably recycled.

The ideal compost bin is easily accessible, has no gaps in the sides and has a lid or cover. It is located in a sunny or semi-shaded position, directly on the soil or turf, away from water-courses. You may even find you need more than one!

What is it made of?

A compost container should keep rain out, and moisture and heat in. For a compost heap, wood (preferably recycled) is the most commonly used material. Most bins on sale are plastic (check it is made from recycled material). You will find ideas for making your own container on the following pages.

How strong is it?

A sturdy container is essential. It will have to withstand battering with forks and spades as you fill and empty it.

Gaps in the sides?

Opinions differ widely on this question, but most compost heaps have solid sides these days. Gaps in the sides of a container or heap are said to be essential to allow air in. In fact they often let the compost dry out at the edges. Ensuring that your compost structure has air spaces and turning the heap will ensure enough air is usually mixed in.

Weight

If you have a bin, and you have to lift it off to access the compost, make sure it is not too heavy. On the other hand, if the bin is too flimsy it may blow over, and will not last long.

Size

Most bins on the market are around 300 litres – which is good for the average household and garden. Choose the largest container you think you can fill. Check the height – some models are too tall for many people to use comfortably.

Lid and base

A lid isn't necessary for a bin. Trials have shown it makes little difference to the speed of the composting process, but many people like one for aesthetic reasons. It should also be easy to remove and replace, and should not easily blow away. Compost boxes usually open at the bottom to allow the compost, which may produce quite a lot of liquid, to drain.

Access

The top opening should be large enough to take a fork full of green waste comfortably. For turning, or extracting finished compost, a removable front is ideal; alternatively simply lift the whole container off.

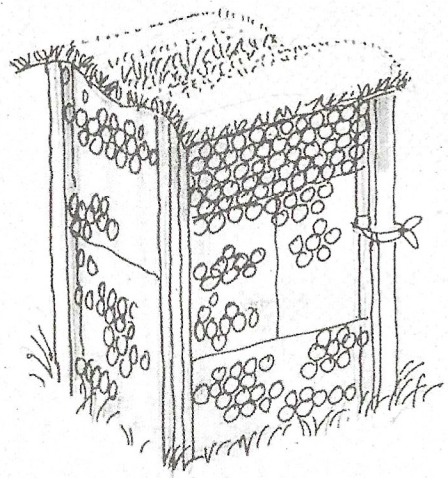
Where to put it

If possible, place your compost bin straight on the ground, rather than on concrete or other hard surface. This allows for drainage and lets worms move in easily. It should have space around it for storing and mixing ingredients, and for turning the compost. You may choose to have a permanent site, or to move the bin(s) around the garden. The ground where a compost heap has been will be very rich.

Compost bins

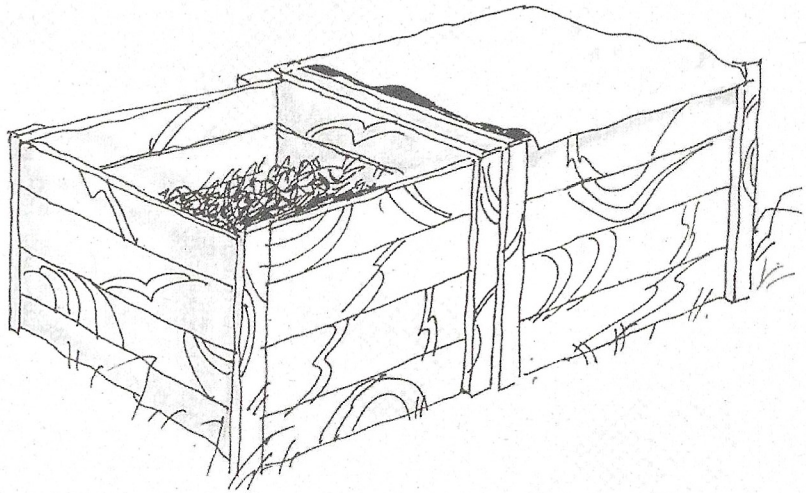
Wire mesh with cardboard

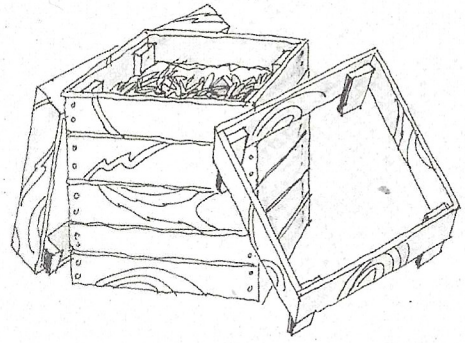
Cheap and easy to make. Drive four posts into the ground, then staple wire mesh to them. Make it easy to open one side for access. Line with cardboard cartons, and top with a plastic sack.



Double New Zealand box

Two strong, static boxes with a removable slatted front. The second bin can be smaller, to take the reduced volume of material that is turned out of the first bin. Usually constructed from wood, you can make this yourself, alternatively there are recycled plastic versions available online.



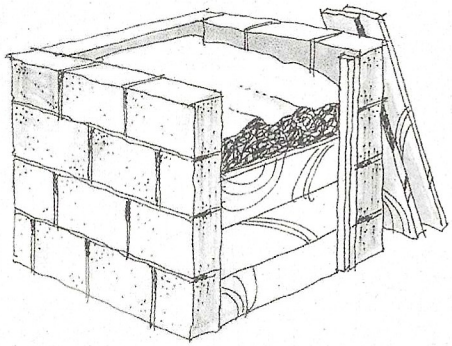


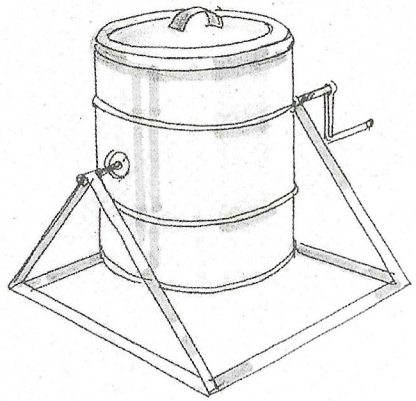
Sectional wooden bin

Sections are stacked up, or removed as required. Individual sections can be made out of different widths of wood. Easily moved.

Breeze blocks with wooden slatted front

A sturdy bin can be built out of recycled breeze blocks. A wooden front that can be removed makes for easy access.





Compost tumbler

This is designed to be turned every day. The regular mixing and aerating can make compost quickly, in three to four weeks.

Bins to buy

If you want to buy a bin, there is a good selection available. Your local council may sell them, alternatively **The Organic Gardening Catalogue** *(www.organiccatalogue.com)* can supply and there are a number of recycled plastic options available online.

Making compost

You can make compost simply by adding compostable items to a heap or bin when you feel like it. It may take up to a year to produce useable compost but it doesn't require much attention. You don't need to turn the material, but it will speed up the process if you do.

A cool heap

Most gardeners find this the easiest route to making their own compost. It requires little work, just adding to the heap or bin over time, until it is full. Then allowing the contents to rot and settle down gradually. Cool compost rarely achieves a heat above 60°C, therefore it won't destroy weed roots or seeds.

Step 1. Collect together a batch of compost materials such as weed foliage, lawn cuttings, plant trimmings, kitchen veg and some paper. You need a layer of at least 30cm or more. Aim for a mix of 'green' ingredients and 'brown' items (see *p.4/5*). This helps to give the heap some structure and maintains air within it, reducing the need for turning the material.

Step 2. Start filling the bin. Spread the ingredients out to the edges Alternate 'green' and 'brown' items, or mix them together first.

Step 3. Continue to fill the container as and when you have suitable compost ingredients. Items can be added individually, but a bigger batch is preferable; for example, a pile of vegetable peelings from a kitchen caddy. Spread the ingredients out to the edges.

Step 4. When the container is full – which it may never be as the contents will sink as it composts – stop adding any more. You can then leave it to finish composting for anything from 6 months to a year, depending on the contents, the container, the weather or ambient temperature.

Step 5. If you have a heap, you can now remove the compost. If some of the top layer is still not broken down, add it to the new heap. If you have a bin, remove it and extract the lower layers of compost to use in the garden. The remainder – which might not have rotted down – can be put back in the bin, with water if it is too dry.

A hot heap

If you are in a hurry for compost then a 'hot' heap may be better for you. It requires more attention and physical effort than the 'cool' heap route, but the higher temperatures during the rotting process will destroy most weed roots and seeds. Avoid pernicious weeds such as bindweed and ground elder.

Step 1. Gather enough material to fill your compost container all in one go. Make sure you have a mixture of green and brown materials.

Step 2. Chop up tough items using shears or a sharp spade (lay items out on soil or grass to avoid jarring) or a shredder.

Step 3. Mix ingredients together as much as possible before adding to the container. In particular, grass mowings that tend to settle and exclude air need to be mixed with more open items such as scrunched up paper and cardboard egg boxes.

Step 4. Within a few days, the heap is likely to get hot to the touch. When it begins to cool down, or a week or two later, turn the heap. Remove everything from the container and mix it all up, trying to get the outside to the inside. Add water if it is dry or dry material if it is soggy. Replace in the bin.

Step 5. The heap will heat up again; the new supply of air you have mixed in allows the fast acting aerobic microbes, i.e those that need oxygen, to continue with their work. Step 4 can be repeated several more times if you have the energy, but the heating will be less and less. When it no longer heats up again, leave it undisturbed to finish composting. A hot heap can take as little as 6 weeks to produce ready to use compost.

When will my compost be ready?

When the ingredients have turned into a dark brown, earthy smelling material, the composting process is complete. You can leave it for a month or two to 'mature' before using it. Don't worry if your compost is not fine and crumbly. Even if it is lumpy, sticky or stringy, with bits of twig and eggshell still obvious, it is quite usable. It can be sieved before using if you prefer. Any large bits can be added back into your new compost heap.

Composting questions answered

What is garden compost?
Compost looks like rich, dark soil. It is made of recycled kitchen and garden wastes. It is used to feed and condition the soil as well as in potting mixes.

Is it the same as multipurpose compost bought in a bag?
No. Sowing, potting and multipurpose composts bought in garden centres, are mixtures of various materials such as loam, sand, coir and fertilisers. These are used for raising seedlings and growing plants in pots. Many contain peat – always ask for 'Peat Free'.

Do I have to be an expert to make compost?
No. Composting just happens, it is nature's way of keeping our planet clean. Just follow the few basic rules in this booklet.

Is it a lot of work?
Making compost can be as easy as putting some paper and vegetable scraps onto a compost heap, and letting nature do the rest. Or you can put a lot of effort into it to create a hot heap which rots faster (see *p.13*). It's up to you.

How long does it take?
Compost can be made in six to eight weeks via the hot heap. Or it can take a year or more in cooler conditions. In general, the more effort you put in, the quicker you will get compost. Heaps are also dependent on ambient temperature – cold weather will delay the rotting process.

Can I put diseased plants in my compost?
Plants with persistent diseases, such as white rot and clubroot, should not be added. A hot heap (see *p.13*), turned several times, should deal with everything else. Diseases that don't need living plants to survive will be killed by the microbial activity.

Can I add weed seeds?
Weed and grass seeds will unfortunately survive a cool heap (see *p.12*), but should be killed in a hot one.

Is it true I can add urine to my heap?
Yes, human urine will act as an activator to help the rotting process.

I've got a lot of worms in my compost. Is that a good thing?
Yes, these worms are usually *Eisenia foetida* (brandling or tiger worms). They help breakdown the rotting material by digesting and secreting it.

Will a compost heap breed pests?
Compost is made by a host of small and microscopic creatures. These are not pests and they will not overrun your garden.

Will a compost heap attract rats or foxes?
Rats and foxes may visit a compost heap if they are already present in the area. If you visit the heap regularly they will move away. It is important not to add meat or cooked food to the heap.

Does a compost heap smell?
A working compost heap should not have an unpleasant smell if you stick to the listed ingredients.

Do I need any special equipment?
See *p.10* for ideas on how to make a compost heap or buy a bin. They will keep everything neat, conserve heat and moisture. A garden fork is the only essential item. A shredder can be very useful where there is a lot of woody material to be composted, but it is not essential.

Is compost safe to handle?
Yes, if the usual garden hygiene rules are followed. Keep cuts covered, wash hands before eating and keep your anti-tetanus protection up-to-date. If the compost is dry and dusty, be careful not to inhale particles - use it where there is plenty of ventilation and consider adding some water before using it.

Will it attract flies?
As long as meat scraps are not put on the compost heap, it should not attract houseflies or bluebottles. Tiny fruit flies may be present in the summer, especially if the heap is too damp. They are attracted to the fruit and vegetable peelings. But these flies are more of a nuisance than a problem. They can be deterred by covering fresh materials with a thin layer of soil, newspaper or finished compost.

Does a compost heap have to get hot?
No. A medium sized compost heap can heat up to 70°C in a few days. The heat helps to make quicker compost, and to kill weeds and diseases. But your compost may never heat up, especially if it is made over a long period. The compost can be just as good, but it will take longer to be ready for use.

Does compost spread weeds and diseases?
Be careful what you add to the heap (see *p.6*). It is true that some weed seeds and roots will survive in a cool compost heap (see previous page) and some diseased plant material is best avoided altogether in a compost heap.

Using compost in your garden

When the compost is dark brown and has an earthy smell the composting process is complete. It is then best left for a month or two to "mature" before it is used. Don't worry if your compost is not fine and crumbly. Even if it is lumpy, sticky or stringy, with bits of twig and eggshell still obvious, it is quite usable. It can be sieved before using if you prefer. Any large bits can be added back into your new compost heap.

How much to use

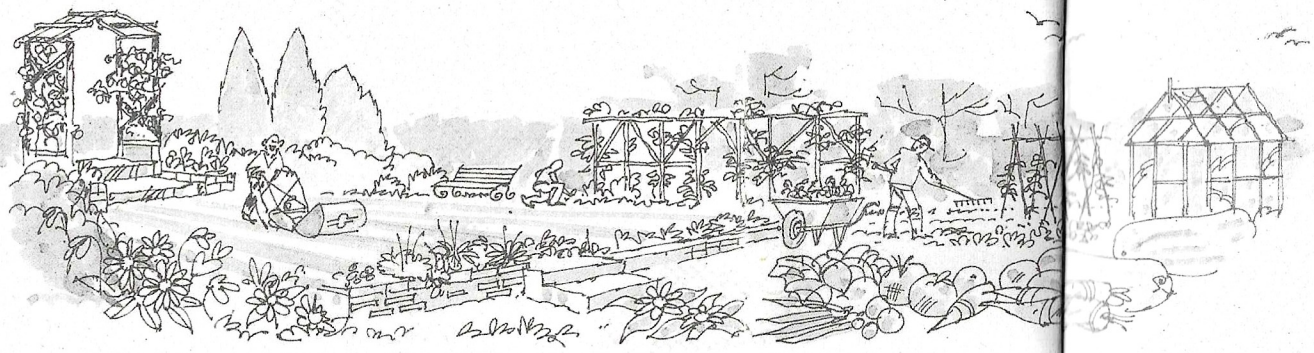
As a rough guide, add a layer of 1-2 inches of compost in the area you intend to grow. This should be ample for one season, or for a crop that likes a rich soil.

When and how

Compost should be applied in the spring, summer and autumn. It is either dug into the top 15–20 cm of soil (no deeper) or left on the surface as a mulch that keeps in moisture and suppresses weeds. Compost can be used on all soils where feeding and conditioning is required. It isn't a quick fix, instead the nutrients are released slowly over time.

Herbs

Use compost where succulent herbs – such as chives, parsley and mint – which need a good supply of food and water, are growing. Do not use on herbs that prefer a poor, dry soil, such as thyme and rosemary.



Shrubs and herbaceous perennials

A compost mulch applied every three years should be ample for most shrubs. Roses, that are pruned hard every year, may need an annual application.

Annual flowers

There is no need to apply compost if the soil is already in good condition and texture. Too much feeding tends to encourage leafy growth at the expense of flowers.

Vegetables

Most compost should go to beds growing potatoes, tomatoes, brassicas and other leafy crops, leeks, pumpkins and courgettes. If you alternate areas where these crops grow year on year (this is known as crop rotation) it means that the whole vegetable plot will have received compost over successive growing seasons.

Fruit

For strawberries, add compost to soil before planting. Apples, plums, pears, cherries, redcurrants, gooseberries: mulch with compost every four to five years. You can add compost more frequently if growth is poor. Blackcurrants, raspberries and hybrid berries: mulch with compost every three years.

Lawns

In spring or summer, add a fine compost that has been sieved.

Tubs and planters

Garden compost should be mixed with other ingredients if it is to be used for container growing. Depending on the needs of the plant, it should be mixed with loam/soil and grit (for drainage). Pots already planted up should have the top layer of soil removed in spring, and replaced with compost. For seedlings or potting plants, use two parts of compost with one part of loam/good soil and one part leafmould.

Notes

Garden Organic is a registered charity in England and Wales (298104) and Scotland (SC046767). VAT no. 258 0869 69

About us

Garden Organic is the authority on all organic gardening matters.

Since 1954 we have researched, promoted, campaigned for and supported organic growing. We provide practical advice – from seed to harvest, from soil preparation to slug management. Visit **www.gardenorganic.org.uk/growing-advice** for inspiration and advice.

Research. Formerly known as HDRA (the Henry Doubleday Research Association), Garden Organic works in partnership with Coventry University – The Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR), based at Ryton Organic Gardens.

Education. Our education programmes help teachers and school professionals to develop gardening projects that teach children where their food comes from, develop their scientific and environmental awareness and encourage them to eat more fruit and vegetables.

Sustainable Communities. An extremely important part of the Garden Organic team is our network of dedicated UK volunteers who work hard to promote the organic growing message including composting in their local communities. We work with sectors including education, healthcare, local authorities, Public Health, NHS, housing associations, businesses and community groups to provide support for volunteer champions in your setting. Master Composters are volunteers who spend time promoting home composting in their local community, encouraging householders to take up composting and ensuring those already composting do so effectively.

Our heritage. At Garden Organic, we are dedicated to preserving our valuable organic heritage. We run The Heritage Seed Library which conserves local vegetable varieties that are not widely available. We work with sister gardens across the UK to support and promote organic growing.

How to support us

Garden Organic's goal is simple – to get more people growing organically. You can help by becoming a supporter. Either by a donation, or by becoming a member. Benefits include on-hand advice and support from our experienced team, free access to affiliated gardens and up-to-date news on organic gardening issues.

For information on all the above, visit **www.gardenorganic.org.uk**

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Compost is the grower's black gold. It feeds the soil and gives it good structure. It also keeps plants healthy and nourished. It's easy to make, and it's free!

This book will help you to create your own compost – the organic way.

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A Garden Organic Composting Factsheet

Dealing with food waste

Bins that 'pre-treats' food waste ready for domestic composting

Bokashi



A Japanese concept, this is an anaerobic process in a sealed container the size of a small waste bin. The process works best with two bins; one maturing while the other is being filled. Special bran inoculated with beneficial microorganisms is sprinkled on each fresh layer of food. There is also a spray available made from fermented fruit extract which is claimed to smell more pleasant. As the process is anaerobic the food can be pressed down to squeeze out air and maximise the amount of material. There is a drain tap for the liquid produced which can be diluted 1;100 and used as a plant food. The liquid can also be used as a drain cleaner!

In about 8 weeks the contents will be pickled, the smell similar to pickled food. Since the lid is airtight you will only smell the contents when adding material. One advantage of this method is that over winter or during bad weather you do not have to visit the compost bin, unlike with a kitchen caddy, which needs emptying on a much more frequent basis. The trip is once every couple of months to empty when the Bokashi bin is full. The mature contents can be dug into the garden or added to your compost bin. The contents will have been rendered unpalatable to vermin.

A bizarre aspect is that, if for instance you have something recognisable like a burnt sausage this will at the end of the pickling process still look like it did the day it went in. Tipped into the compost bin and exposed to air that sausage will very quickly disintegrate.

Bin that deals with some, but not all cooked food waste

Wormery



Not for cooked meat but fine for vegetable waste from the kitchen, a useful way of dealing with vegetable peelings, tea leaves etc. Fun and educational for children. You will produce compost with a high nutrient value. Useful to top up potted plants, hungry feeders and make a mix for mature plants. Not for use on seedlings, it is far too nutrient rich. This system also produces a liquid which can be diluted 1:10 for use as a plant food.

Summary

If you are only dealing with food waste then a Green Cone or Bokashi bin could well be the answer. If you have a high proportion of food waste relative to garden waste (or can afford the luxury of having several bins) then the Hotbin is good. If you want a flexible garden waste and food composter that can handle larger quantities the Green Johanna is good. It all depends on the budget available, space limitations, volumes of raw materials and what suites your lifestyle.

- Green Johanna and Green Cone available from: www.greatgreensystems.com
- Hot Bins available from: www.hotbincomposting.com
- Bokashi and wormeries available from: www.getcomposting.com

Visit our website to find out more:
www.gardenorganic.org.uk

A Garden Organic Composting Factsheet

Dealing with food waste

We all try to avoid food waste and particularly cooked food waste but sometimes this is not possible. There will always be fish and meat bones, fish skin, gristle, burnt offerings, slops of leftover gravy and that Chinese takeaway you could not quite finish. The conventional wisdom is that you cannot compost this material at home, especially in the standard cool composting methods we advocate to 'new' home composters. Cooked foods and meat and dairy products may attract vermin, but they can be pre-treated to avoid this risk or added to an alternative style of compost bin designed to be rodent proof.

It is not only gardeners who are interested; there are many people with little or no garden who would like to be able to deal with their cooked food waste at home. There are a range of domestic options available for this, some of which produce compost as an end product and some of which pre-treat the waste ready to be added to a standard compost bin.

Bins that deal with food waste AND produce compost

Green Johanna



This compost bin is completely enclosed with a perforated base. It will deal with any garden or food waste. A good quality bin, which arrives flat packed, it is easy to assemble. Whilst in theory a rodent could easily chew through the plastic, we have never seen this happen. The bin comes with an optional removable winter jacket made of foam polyethylene which can be fitted when outdoor temperatures drop consistently below 5°C to keep it working at optimum level.

Hot Bin



A well insulated bin that when working well produces compost quickly (3-6months). The access hatch can be difficult to reseal as soil residue blocks it up however can be brushed free and strapped up. It can compost food waste including all cooked foods. The insulation combined with the regular addition of fresh materials will maintain a temperature of up to 60°C. When used correctly with the straps provided there are no vermin issues.

Bin that deals with food waste AND DOESN'T produce compost

Green Cone



Technically, a food waste digester, used to dispose of unwanted food. The part you can see is double skinned and is designed to generate maximum heat. The part you can not see, buried in the ground is where the material rots down. The nutrients in the material as it decomposes are taken up by surrounding plants, after 2 or 3 years you may need to empty any remaining contents which could be added to your compost heap.

You must have well drained soil; the Green Cone will not work if the ground is waterlogged. It is an excellent solution for someone not keen on gardening or with limited mobility and not able to deal with compost.

Visit our website to find out more:
www.gardenorganic.org.uk

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Why Choose EnergyZone?

- Well-established company with a proven track record in delivering innovative and energy-efficient solutions.
- Customised plans to cater for you and your properties needs and characteristics.
- A friendly, reliable, customer focused team to help guide you through every step of your installation.

MCS CERTIFIED · TRUSTMARK Government Endorsed Quality · RECC Renewable Energy Consumer Code · NICEIC Domestic Installer · NICEIC Approved Contractor · Gas Safe Register

garden organic

organic pioneers since 1958

Composting basics:

What should I put in?

Plant derived materials



ANNUAL WEEDS



STRAW



CARDBOARD



GRASS MOWINGS

Meat, fish, dairy or cooked foods



COOKED FOOD



BONES



DAIRY PRODUCTS



CAT LITTER

Find out more:

www.gardenorganic.org.uk

garden organic

organic pioneers since 1958

Composting basics:

Getting the mix right

50% Brown materials
Carbon rich



WOODY PRUNINGS



STRAW



CARDBOARD



AUTUMN LEAVES

Dry, tougher and woodier materials; slow to compost

50% Green materials
Nitrogen rich



GRASS MOWINGS



ANNUAL WEEDS



COMFREY LEAVES



FRUIT & VEG WASTE

Soft, moist young plants, fruit and veg peelings; compost quickly

Getting started

Put your compost bin somewhere that is convenient to put materials in and take the ready compost out. Ideally it will be in a semi-shaded position on bare earth but don't worry if it isn't.

Harvesting compost

When the compost is dark brown and has an earthy smell the composting process is complete. Anything that has not fully composted can be thrown back in, but the ready compost can be used on the garden.

Living with an Electric Vehicle

Do you have off-street parking where you can install a charge point? In that case there's little to stop you buying an EV as your next car.

Otherwise, there are AC charge points in the Listley Street, Severn Street and Innage Lane car parks and rapid DC chargers next to Starbucks on the Stourbridge road.

A 'local' car, with few long journeys

Virtually all EVs can now handle journeys of 120 to 200 miles without charging. If you only use your car (or your second car) for 'local' journeys then you'll rarely need to charge away from home. The Lake District, for example, is about 160 miles away, so you can make many journeys in the UK in a single hop, only needing to recharge at your destination.

If you need to make the odd longer journey, even EVs that rapid charge as slow as 40 kW[1] will cope (most charge faster than this). At 40 kW, charging for 40 to 60 minutes will add about 100 to 150 miles of range. You'll save this time over a year by not visiting petrol stations!

Charging at home

It's best to install a 7 kW AC charge point at home, which should usually cost under £1,000 installed. EV electricity tariffs charge about 7 p/kWh for 4 (or more) hours overnight, which works out at less than 3 p/mile, compared to over 13 p/mile for even an efficient petrol car, saving you over £1,000 for every 10,000 miles travelled.

Regular longer journeys and range

If you need to make regular longer journeys, buy an EV that charges at 100 kW or faster, and stop at chargers that support ultra-rapid charging. Charging speed is the key parameter, rather than range, as you'll usually need to stop for a break before the EV needs to be charged. 100 kW adds around 100 to 150 miles of range in about 20 minutes. Drive for 2 to 3 hours and then charge while you need to stop.

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[1] Power (rate of energy use) is measured in kW - a kettle takes about 2kW. Energy is measured in kWh - boiling a kettle for 1 hour consumes about 2 kWh.

May 2026

Charging on a journey

What would you do if you'd never seen a petrol pump and arrived at one during your first drive in a petrol-engined car? Do practice rapid charging and plan before your first long journey in an EV, or you should expect to have problems.

You'll set off with a full charge and could use most of your car's range (down to about 20%) before charging, but you'll probably need to stop for a break well before that. Before setting off, use Zap-Map, Electroverse or ABRP to find a few alternative rapid chargers around where you expect to stop. If one is occupied or not working, go on to the next.

Stick to reliable networks, such as Instavolt, Osprey, Gridserve, Ionity and Telsa (open to all EV sites). Use the filter on Electroverse to look for locations with more than one charger. Avoid motorway service stations, unless they have a large bank of chargers, as everyone seems to stop at them and the chargers are often occupied. Inexperienced EV drivers try to stop there and are surprised when the few chargers are all occupied. There are plenty of chargers just off many motorway junctions.

To pay, RFID cards and apps from Electroverse and Tesla are sufficient, along with contactless credit cards. Zap-Pay is an alternative.

Costs

As we've seen, off-peak charging at home saves a lot on fuel bills. In addition, servicing costs are low, as there's no oil or timing belt to change and EVs have far fewer moving parts. However, public charging typically costs 50 to 90 p/kWh, costing up to the cost per mile of petrol.

Used EV's needn't cost any more to buy than a petrol-engined car. For example, 2022 Peugeot e208 EVs with around 20,000 miles are currently listed on AutoTrader from about £10,000, while similar 208 1.2 litre petrol cars are from about £11,000. You will save on running costs and the EV is far nicer to drive.

You can buy a 2025 EV capable of regular long journeys with a practical range of over 250 miles and fast DC charging from around £20,000, which is comparable to similar petrol and diesel cars.

See our Facebook page for details of Sustainable Bridgnorth meetings where you can meet EV users to give you more advice. Contact us at energyadvice@sustainablebridgnorth.org.uk.

May 2026

Planet-friendly Food

Zero Carbon Shropshire

The food we eat accounts for 25% of the UK's harmful emissions that cause climate change.

We can help protect the planet by choosing planet-friendly food.

How land is used, and how food is grown, transported, packaged and sold all contribute to gas emissions.

Here's how you can help:

Cut down on meat

There's no need to go completely vegetarian or vegan -- every meal where you skip the meat helps the planet.

Buy local food

Food miles add a LOT to the carbon footprint of food. Local food also supports local producers.

Eat food in season

Fresh strawberries or beans are great in summer -- but not all year when they are flown halfway round the world.

Adopt a plant-based diet

This undoubtedly has the most impact in cutting your carbon footprint through your food choices.



Buy food with minimal packaging

Excessive plastic just gets thrown away, harming the environment.

Cut down on food waste

The UK wastes 10 million tonnes of food each year, and 80% of that is from households.

Plan your meals

Decide what you will need before you go shopping, and think about how to use what's in the fridge.

Batch cook and freeze

If you're going to the trouble of cooking from scratch, make loads in one go and store the extra portions to eat in the week ahead.

Get creative with leftovers

Think before throwing away uneaten food - often it can be added to a stew or turned into a hearty nutritious soup.

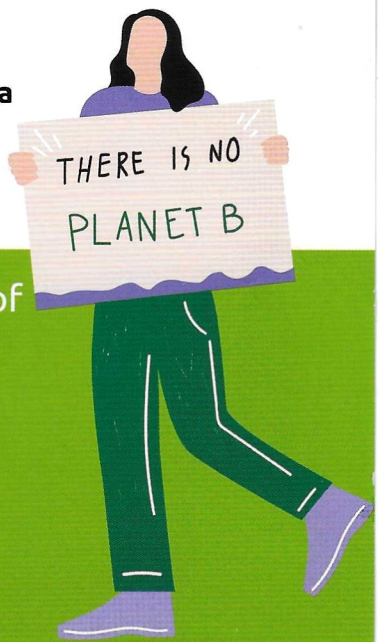
Get into composting

Set aside a corner of your garden for a compost heap and next year you will have made fertile soil.

Use the Food Hub

Food shares happen in Shrewsbury several times a week - don't let this good food go to waste!

https://www.shrewsburyfoodhub.org.uk/



Zero Carbon Shropshire is a partnership of local people dedicated to helping our county combat climate change. For more information, and to get involved,

visit www.zerocarbonshropshire.org

Please recycle this leaflet after use.

Shropshire Climate Action

12 ways to save money and help the planet FOOD

#1. Cut down on meat

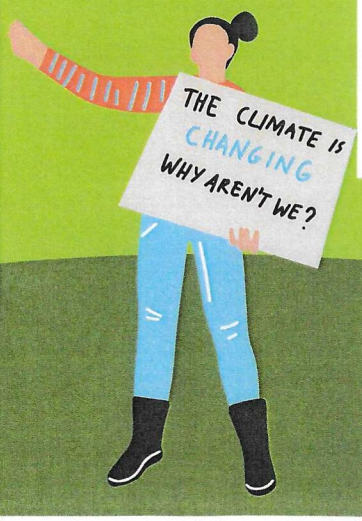
It's not necessary to go completely vegan - every meal you have that skips the meat, helps planet & pocket

#2. Adopt a plant-based diet

This is undoubtedly the most impactful way of cutting your carbon footprint through your food choices.

#3. Buy food with minimal packaging

Plastic packaging can be excessive, and it just gets thrown away causing pollution.



#4. Buy local food

Food miles add a LOT to the carbon footprint of food. Local food also supports local producers.

#5. Get into composting

Set aside a corner of your garden for a compost heap and next year you will have made fertile soil.

#6. Use the Food Hub

Food shares happen in Shrewsbury several times a week - don't let this good food go to waste!

Shropshire Climate Action
for Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin

#7. Batch cook and freeze

If you're going to the trouble of cooking from scratch, make loads in one go and store the extra portions to eat in the week ahead.

#8. Create with leftovers

Think before throwing away uneaten food - often it can be added to a stew or turned into a hearty nutritious soup.

#9. Less can be More

The customer is king so explain to supermarket customer services that you want less packaging as you're concerned about the environment.

#10. Don't be fooled by brands

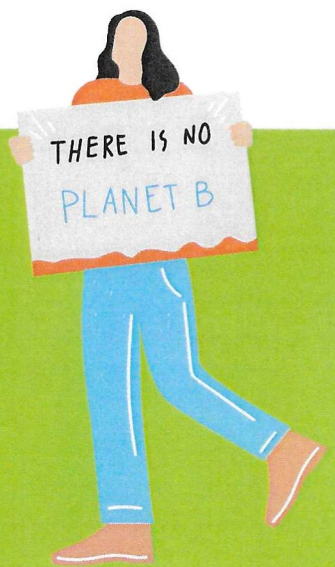
Similar products are often made from the same ingredients in the same factory and just have a different label - and price - added.

#11. An egg's an egg

Save money by buying medium instead of large - they are equivalent in recipes, and kinder to the chickens that lay them.

#12. Soak pasta for 10 mins before cooking

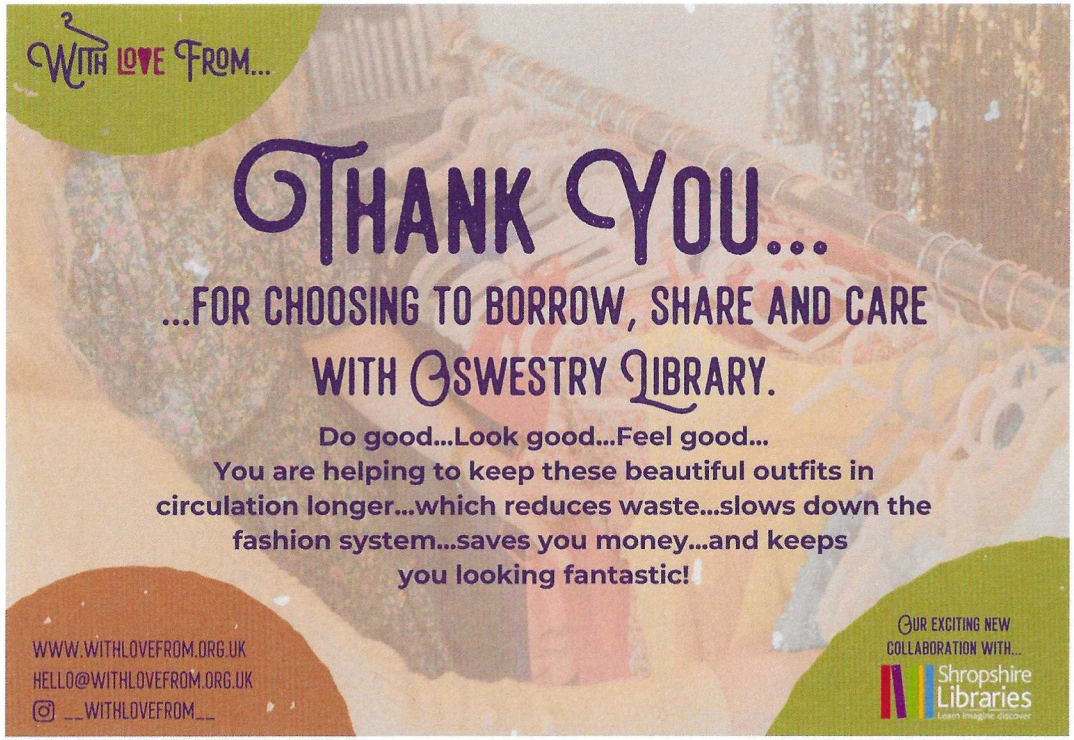
Cooking time will be reduced, saving energy, time and money.



Shropshire Climate Action is a partnership of local people dedicated to helping our county combat climate change. For more information, and to get involved, visit https://www.shropshireclimateaction.org

On a low income? For help and advice contact Keep Shropshire Warm on 0800 112 3743.

Please recycle this leaflet after use.

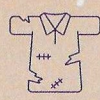

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