

Guide to composting

How to create compost

Home composting is a simple process. Follow these steps:

1. Find the right site

Ideally site your home compost bin should be placed in a reasonably sunny site, on bare soil. If you have to put your compost bin on concrete, tarmac or patio slabs ensure there's a layer of paper and twigs or existing compost on the bottom.

Choose a place where you can easily add ingredients to the bin and get the compost out.

2. Find a container and add the right ingredients

Have a container available such as a kitchen caddy or old ice cream tub. Fill your kitchen caddy or container with vegetable and fruit peelings, teabags, toilet roll tubes, torn up cereal boxes and eggshells.

Take care not to compost cooked food, meat or fish.

3. Fill up your container

Empty your kitchen caddy along with your garden waste into your compost bin. A 50/50 mix of greens and browns is the perfect recipe for good compost.

4. Mix up the ingredients

With a garden fork, give the contents of your bin a mix every now and then. This will help break down the materials faster.

5. Wait for the compost to become ready for use

It takes between six and twelve months for your compost to become ready for use, so now all you need to do is wait and let nature do the work. Keep on adding regularly greens and browns to top up your compost.

6. Check whether it's ready to use

Once your compost has turned into a crumbly, dark material, resembling thick, moist soil and gives off an earthy, fresh aroma, you know it's ready to use.

7. Remove the compost

Lift the bin slightly or open the hatch at the bottom and scoop out the fresh compost with a garden fork, spade or trowel.

8. Use it in your garden

Don't worry if your compost looks a little lumpy with twigs and bits of eggshell - this is perfectly normal. Use it to enrich borders and vegetable patches, plant up patio containers or feed the lawn.

Materials you can and can't compost

You need to get the right combination of greens and browns to provide the perfect conditions for the composting process.

Greens you can compost

These are materials which are quick to rot and provide important nitrogen and moisture:

- tea bags
- grass cuttings
- soft prunings
- fresh uncooked vegetable and fruit waste

- old flowers
- coffee grounds.

Browns you can compost

These are materials which are slower to rot, provide carbon and fibre and allow air pockets to form:

- torn up cardboard
- egg boxes
- toilet roll centres
- scrunched up or shredded paper
- fallen leaves
- small woody prunings.

Materials you can't compost

Certain materials should never be placed in the bin, such as:

- nappies
- glass
- plastics
- metals
- cooked and uncooked meat, fish and bones
- any other cooked foods
- cheese and other dairy products
- fats
- roots of perennial weeds
- diseased plants
- cat and dog faeces.