



Creating a network of local food production in the Scottish Borders

10 STEP COMPOSTING INFORMATION SHEET

1. Buy or build a decent compost bin. There are lots of ideas on-line if you are making your own.
2. Pick the perfect spot for your compost heap or bin. It's best to site it on a level, well-drained spot, which will ensure that any excess water drains away easily. This also helps worms to get in and get on with the job of breaking down the content
3. Let the worms do the hard work. Nature has provided us with the perfect waste disposal unit in the humble worm. They can live their whole lives in the dark and love the moist atmosphere of a wormery or compost heap, eating the waste material you put in and converting it into liquid feed and compost
4. Put the right stuff in. Good things to compost include vegetable peelings, fruit waste, teabags, plant prunings and grass cuttings. These are fast to break down and provide important nitrogen as well as moisture. It is also good to include things such as cardboard egg boxes, scrunched up paper and fallen leaves. These are slower to rot but provide vital fibre and carbon and allow important air pockets to form in the mixture.
5. Keep the wrong stuff out. No meat or dairy products. No diseased plants, no dog poo or used cat litter or babies' nappies. Putting any of these in the compost leads to unwanted pests and smells. Avoid composting perennial weeds (such as dandelions and thistle) or weeds with seed heads unless you have a hot composting system. Plastics, glass, and metals are not suitable for composting and should be recycled separately.

See our companion information sheet for information on what should and should not be in your compost

6. Get the balance right. The key to good compost lies in getting the mix right. You need to keep your 'greens' and 'browns' properly balanced. If your compost is too wet, add more 'browns'. If it's too dry, add some 'greens'. Making sure there is enough air in the mixture is also important. Adding scrunched up bits of cardboard is a simple way to create air pockets that will help keep your compost healthy. Air can also be added by mixing the contents
7. Give it a good airing. A well-cared-for compost heap requires regular turning, which can be a tricky job without the right tools. A compost aerator will do the trick and can be bought at a garden centre. Turning your compost helps to aerate and mix up the waste and cuttings, which leads to faster composting.

8. Boost to the system. You can encourage the correct enzymes in your compost by using a compost activator. It helps to turn your grass, leaves and garden waste into dark, rich, crumbly compost in less than half the time. You mix a small amount into water, pour it onto your compost and after ten weeks of rotting, your compost is ready to use. It can also be used to revive partially composted or dead heaps. You can buy a ready-made compost activator from a garden centre or make your own. There are lots of ideas on-line
9. Turn fallen leaves into compost too. Fallen leaves are a good source of compost. It's fine to add these to your compost bin but if you have large amounts of leaves, you might prefer to place them in a large biodegradable leaf bag. Once you've gathered up your fallen leaves they can be left to turn into a brilliant source of moisture-rich soil improver that's great to use for potting mixes as an alternative to peat. The leaves will be kept neatly in one place and the sack will biodegrade, leaving you with a rich pile of wonderful compost
10. Getting the best out of your compost. When your compost is ready you'll have a dark brown, almost black soil-like layer at the bottom of your bin. It should have a spongy texture and will be rich in nutrients. Spreading the finished compost into your flowerbeds greatly improves soil quality by helping it retain moisture and suppressing weeds