

What to put in your compost bin

You need to aim for a balanced diet of '**GREENS**' and '**BROWNS**'

'GREENS'

Fruit and vegetable remains, dead flowers, weeds, young hedge clippings, vegetable plant remains, grass clippings (not too many), crushed eggshells, teabags, coffee grounds

'BROWNS'

Woody prunings, plant stems, twigs, autumn leaves (small quantities), crumpled cardboard, egg boxes, wood shavings, animal manure

TURBO-CHARGE YOUR COMPOSTING

Chopping everything up will speed up composting. It also reduces its bulk dramatically, so you can get more in your composter.

Water as needed to keep moist, like a plant

The right sort of shredder shreds and crushes wood prunings, making perfect material for composting.

GETTING GOING

Put the bin somewhere convenient to use, on bare earth, in the sun or shade.

Start with the top of your previous heap, some animal manure, or a layer of **BROWNS**.

Add compost materials as they come, trying to get equal amounts of **BROWNS** and **GREENS**. This will make your compost the right texture - not compacted or full of large air pockets.

Each time you use your compost bin, before adding more, check that it's not too wet or too dry. If it's dry, water it. If it's soggy, mix in some more **BROWNS**.

If most of what you compost is **GREENS**, and you haven't got enough garden **BROWNS**, then add in crumpled egg boxes, cardboard tubes and boxes torn up.

'**BROWNS**' compost more slowly, but are essential to give the compost texture and allow air through the heap. On their own they tend to be too dry.

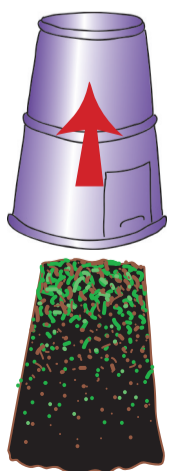
'**GREENS**' rot quickly, and can become compacted. Mix with '**BROWNS**' to prevent the compost becoming slimy and smelly.

DO NOT COMPOST

Meat, fish, cooked food, dairy products, roots of perennial weeds (like dandelions, ground elder, bindweed, couch, docks), any diseased plants, cat or dog faeces, plastic, glass and metal.

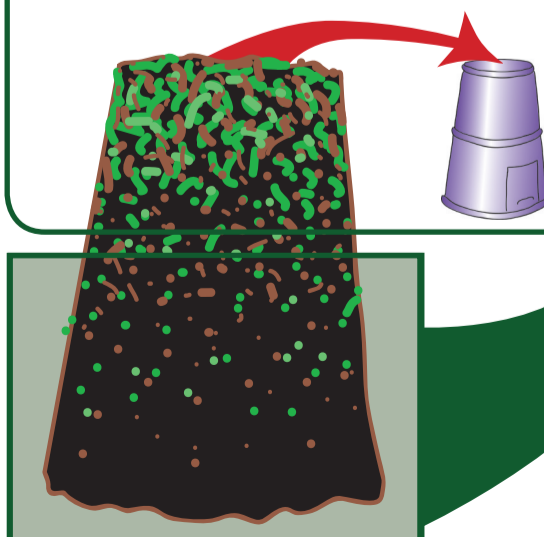
HARVESTING

When your bin is full, or you want some compost, it's time to start a new compost heap. You don't need to wait until everything in the bin has composted.



1 Lift the bin up in the air - the compost will stay like a neat 'sandcastle'.

2 Take off the top uncomposted layer plus the wormy layer just below - this might easily be the top third or so. Use this material to start your next bin at full speed.



3 Using your compost

Soil conditioner

Dig it into the top 150mm of your soil, or put some into each planting hole.

Potting mixes

Mix sieved compost with sharp sand and soil. Use roughly equal portions of each or vary quantities to suit your plants.

Mulch or top dressing

Spread a thick layer around plants to retain moisture and feed plants