



# HOME COMPOSTING GUIDE

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*The best gardens aren't the ones that look the prettiest, it's the ones that reuse and recycle everything and the ones that accommodate you and other life. It's an endless cycle and nothing is thrown away.*

*Home composting is a perfect place to start. It's so much cheaper than making endless very expensive trips to the garden center for bags of compost and topsoil, also considering the fact that the very best soils can not be bought out of a bag no matter how much you spend. The reason for this is soils that you cultivate and nurture over time through composting, adding manure and maybe even using a no-dig system all have the essential microorganisms, mycorrhizal fungi and worms to make them successful. The compost you buy from the garden center doesn't have any of that; it is just a very basic growing medium with some feed thrown in for the garden.*

*What I want to share with you is how to make your own compost at home.*


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# HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN COMPOST.

## Step 1-

*You're going to need a container to store all your carbon and nitrogenous waste in (this just means your brown and green waste). You can buy composting bins or you can make your own compost bin. To make your own you can use wood such as pallets or if you have any empty large plastic containers you can use that just drill holes in it and make sure there's plenty of aeration. If you check online there are loads of good ideas.*

*Once you have your composter then place it in a shady or part-shady area of your garden, the reason for this is because the organisms breaking down your waste don't like extremes of temperature. Then also make sure it's on soil ideally so the organisms can make their way into the compost.*



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*Also if you cut your grass and have a load of grass clippings store them in a back shady corner to break down or grow potatoes in it- we have done a video on that.*

## *Step 2-*

*filling the compost bin, a 50:50 mix of green waste and brown materials.*

*This will prevent it from becoming too sludgy or too dry and make sure it will break down.*

*Green material is the carbon rich part-*

- *Kitchen scraps - avoid putting in meats, bones, white potato skins and only putting in fruit and veg bits.*
- *Annual weeds*
- *Biodegradable tea bags*


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## *Brown waste, high in nitrogen*

- *Hay and straw*
- *Twigs and branches cut up small*
- *Egg shells ground down - you can leave them to dry in bulk then put them in a blender before putting them in the compost*
- *Ashes from wood. (non treated wood)*

## *Step 3*

*Now that you have started to fill your composter, continuous care to get the perfect compost is-*

- *Wet it occasionally, it should be like a damp sponge*
  - *Turn it often this keeps air in it and stops it going anaerobic which causes fungal growth and makes it turn slimy.*
  - *Try to fill it relatively quickly then you get more compost sooner.*
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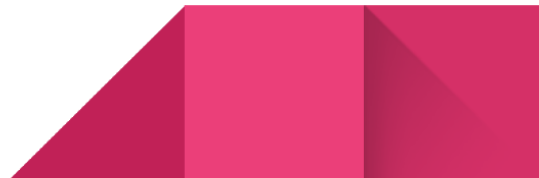
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- *You can add compost accelerators such as garota that will help aid composting in a shorter timespan.*

## COMPOSTING TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE.

### - Why isn't my compost breaking down ?

- *Compost needs a mix of brown and green materials, this is so the microorganisms have food they need to break down the compost instead of it being stagnant.*
- *It needs to be turned regularly so air stays in the heap.*
- *Water it ! the organisms need moisture but not to be swamped check how dry or wet it is.*
- *You can add a compost activator. This is a mix of organisms and feed that can be added to speed the decomposition.*

### Why is it slimy ?



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*a lot of green matter being added to the heap which will cause anaerobic conditions for the organisms as they feed off brown matter to break down the green. To control this add plenty of brown matter such as egg shells, cardboard, paper with no ink, straw, hay etc. and mix in well then water.*

### *Why is it so dry ?*

*Could be due to it being mostly brown matter, add more green materials like kitchen scraps and mix well aiming for a 50-50 mix.*

- *In a full sun location too hot for organisms to live in making it very dry.*
- *You haven't been watering the compost heap and it's dried out.*
- *If you have ants in your compost bin. Ants favour warm and dry conditions and will seek them out. watering the compost heap and turning it will disturb them. Although they are not a bad organism to have in the compost heap at all as they will constantly turn and break down the compost. The only bad side is ants tend to farm aphids/ greenfly as pets for their honeydew excretions to feed on.*

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*They will farm them on a choice plant closeby such as a rose or a young small tree. To get rid of these pests a solution of water and fairy liquid in a spray bottle does the trick to spray on the infestation and you can also squish them with a paper towel to wipe off beforehand then spray.*

### *There are loads of flies in my compost bin*

*They could be fruit flies which are attracted to fruit and veg scraps. If you have an excess of fruit and veg scraps that have been left with not a lot of anything else in there then that will attract them. To stop flies in your compost bin add plenty of brown material in with it and mix in this will reduce the smell of the fruit and veg which attracted them and if you haven't already, add a lid onto the compost bin.*

*If you have any problems with composting or something you need help with hasn't been covered yet. Email [cardenden@orevalleyha.org.uk](mailto:cardenden@orevalleyha.org.uk)*

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