

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Composting is Nature's way of recycling and helps to reduce the amount of waste we put out for the bin men. By composting your kitchen and garden waste you can easily improve the quality of your soil and be well on your way to a more beautiful school garden. The following easy guide to home composting will provide you with all the information needed to get the best out of your bin.

Now let's get composting!

STEP 1 - GET YOUR BIN READY

To start with you need a bin or other similar container. It's best to site your bin on a level, well-drained spot. This allows excess water to drain out and makes it easier for helpful creatures such as worms to get in and get working on breaking down the contents. Placing your bin in a partially sunny spot can help speed up the composting process. Put it near your school garden if possible too so you don't have to carry your compost far.

STEP 2 - PUT THESE IN

Like any recipe, your compost relies on the right ingredients to make it work. Good things you can compost include vegetable peelings, fruit and teabags from your canteen as well as plant prunings and grass cuttings. These are called "Greens." Greens are quick to rot and they provide important nitrogen and moisture. Other things you can compost include cardboard egg boxes, scrunched up paper and fallen leaves. These are called "Browns" and take longer to rot. They provide fibre and carbon and also allow important air pockets to form in your compost. Crushed eggshells can be included to add useful minerals.

STEP 3 - KEEP THESE OUT

Certain things should never be placed in your bin. No cooked vegetables, no meat, no dairy products, no diseased plants and definitely no dog poo, cat litter or baby's nappies. Putting these in your bin can encourage unwanted pests and can also create an unpleasant odour. Also avoid composting perennial weeds (such as dandelions and thistle) or weeds with seed heads. Remember that plastics, glass and metals are not suitable for composting and should be recycled separately.



STEP 4 - MIX IT UP

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. After approximately 6-9 months your finished compost will be ready.

STEP 5 - USING YOUR COMPOST

Finished compost is a dark brown, almost black soil-like layer that you'll find at the bottom of your bin. It has a spongy texture and is rich in nutrients. Some bins have a small hatch at the bottom that you can remove to get at the finished product, but sometimes it's even easier to lift the bin or to tip it over to get at your compost. Spreading the finished compost into your flowerbeds improves soil by helping it keep water in and weeds out – your garden should soon be blooming beautiful!

