



### ***What type of bin should I choose?***

- Make sure your bin has no base, and sits on soil. This allows passage of moisture, insects and worms. Use small mesh chicken wire to prevent rats from getting in through the base. Rats are much less of a problem if composting garden waste only.

- **Plastic** composting bins with a lid are suitable for a small garden. This keeps excessive water out, and helps to keep heat in, but makes it difficult to turn the compost with a fork to keep it aerated; Decomposition tends to be slow.

- **Wooden bins** for a larger garden are easily built, eg from pallets. All organic material can be processed, including

shredded wood, prunings etc..The front panel can be removable to ease regular forking for aeration, and for digging out the compost.

- **Hotbins** are good for quickly converting kitchen waste and smaller volumes of garden waste, and are a very safe, tidy, compact way of making compost. A high temperature process (40 to 60°C) similar to Household Waste Recycling centres can be achieved on a domestic scale (<https://www.hotbincomposting.com/>).

This process also enables diseased plant material, and roots of difficult weeds (ground elder, couch grass etc) along with fly and codling moth larvae etc. to be turned into safe compost.

- A **wormery** is an alternative compact device, in which the digestion is mainly carried out by worms; the worm casts or “vermicompost” accumulate in a chamber beneath a grill supporting the composting material. Red worms need to be introduced. You could buy them, often called “tiger worms”. But they are common, appearing wherever there is rotting organic material, and often seen close to the top of plastic compost bins, if the compost temperature has got too high for their comfort.

### ***Do “compostable bags” decompose?***

Compostable bags decompose at a reasonable rate in high temperature

composting processes (eg by Household waste disposal sites, or in a hotbin), but it can take a year or more for them to decompose in your own compost bin. Putting filled compostable bags, especially if tied closed, into a composter will inhibit aeration and decomposition. Research in this area is ongoing: <https://www.bigcompostexperiment.org.uk/blog>

### ***What do I do if I can't manage any of these?***

Use a garden and kitchen waste bin provided by your local authority's waste disposal service. They can do the composting, and make use of all that nitrogenous fertilizer and soil improver, AND avoid the climate damaging methane emissions that would be produced if put into land fill. If you need soil conditioner, buy it from them, and don't buy peat-based potting compost.

### ***How do I make the best compost ?***

♦ **Feed your heap with a mix of green and brown materials.** This the first secret to making great compost quickly. Aim for a mix of thin alternating layers of green (nitrogen-rich) and brown (carbon-rich) materials.

The green includes grass clippings, weeds and uncooked vegetable peelings. Brown includes sticks and dried grass, wood chippings, shredded paper and cardboard.

♦ **Shred your material thinly.** This is the second rule for making great compost. The finer the material is shredded before it goes on, the quicker it will rot. Get this right and your heap should build up quite a temperature, killing off any weed seeds.

♦ **What not to compost in a wildlife-friendly bin.** Don't include meat, cooked food (bread, cooked rice, leftovers etc), dairy products or pet waste. Avoid these, and the risk of rats using your heap are very small.

if it rains. You could use an old offcut of carpet or some wood. Turning the contents with a fork can help speed up the decomposition.

Then you can return all the goodness of this wholesome compost back to your garden, within a year, sometimes less.

This table show the relative rates of digestion of different organic wastes .



from <https://www.hotbincomposting.com/user/downloads/HOTBIN-UserManual-v3dl.pdf>

speed of waste digestion by bacteria		
easy (fast)	medium	hard (slow)
chicken pellets blood and bone meal nettles and comfrey vegetables and peelings fruit and peelings grass clippings*	straw/hay manures tea bags compostable bags <b>Items That Require Shredding</b> printed & office paper glossy magazines corrugated cardboard	shells (fish and eggs) sawdust & wood shavings twigs and branches coffee grounds <b>Items That Require Shredding</b> leaves newspaper cereal packets and card
ONLY Add The Following When HOT Composting (40-60°C)		
cooked food waste meat & fish (inc skins) leftovers (inc pet food) pasta & rice mouldy bread & cakes	diseased plant material used cat litter*	pet bedding & waste* bones weeds* some require 60°C

## COMPOST

### *What is it, and what happens to it?*

Compost is made when organic materials are broken down naturally by earthworms, bacteria and other organisms that live in soil. Although the composting process can occur without any further human involvement, most composting involves the addition of water and oxygen - which occurs by turning the compost - to speed up the overall process. After several months, when all the organic material is

♦ **Keep the heap moist but not sodden.** Water it with a watering can if necessary in dry weather. Putting a cover on your heap helps keep in heat and moisture, but keeps it from getting too wet

broken down, the final product is created and is often referred to as **humus**. ideal for plant roots, and useful to the gardener as a fertilizer and a mulch.

***Does composting help biodiversity?***

Yes - Inside the compost, worms and fungi feed on the rotting vegetable matter. Insect predators feed on the slugs, insects and other invertebrates that are attracted to the heap. Birds visit to seek out insects and seeds. Some animals, such as smooth newts, shelter there during the day.