

# Home composting made easy



**Surrey** waste partnership  
*Your councils working together*

The Surrey Waste Partnership is made up of Surrey County Council and the 11 district and borough councils in the county. It aims to manage Surrey's waste in the most efficient, economic and sustainable way possible.

One way to do this is to get Surrey residents composting at home. This can benefit the environment by reducing waste and save you money.

Spring is an ideal time to get composting. Not only is it the start of the gardening season, but also the warmer weather helps to break down waste at a faster rate.

This simple guide will help you to get started and get composting.



## Why compost at home?

Home composting is a natural process that transforms your kitchen and garden waste into nutrient rich food, known as compost, for your garden. It's an environmentally friendly method of dealing with kitchen scraps and garden waste that also benefits your pocket as it produces the compost for free.

In scientific terms, composting is the break down of organic material (kitchen scraps and garden waste), in the presence of oxygen. Microscopic organisms such as bacteria and fungi break down the materials we compost by feeding on them, until it becomes a rich, earthy substance ready to help your garden grow.



The image shows three plastic bags tied at the top, arranged in a row from left to right. The first bag on the left is a vibrant green color, while the two bags on the right are black. The bags are filled and have a crinkled texture. The background is plain white, and the bags are resting on a light-colored surface that shows a slight reflection.

**compostable  
waste**

## Did you know?

- One third of the household waste you throw away could be used for composting.
- Composting at home for just one year can save global warming gases equivalent to all the CO<sub>2</sub> your kettle produces annually.
- Multi-purpose compost, unless labelled peat free can contain 70-100% peat.
- Composting at home for just one year can save global warming gases equivalent to all the CO<sub>2</sub> your washing machine produces in 3 months.
- An average household that composts at home could expect to divert over 150kg of waste from landfill each year – that's equivalent in weight to a baby elephant!

## Benefits of home composting



### Saves you money

- By not having to buy compost.
- Because it is organic and reduces the need for other garden products.



### Boosts your garden by

- Improving soil structure and fertility, keeping your soil's PH balance in place and maintaining moisture levels.
- Adding to plant health and growth.
- Feeding your lawn and enriching borders.
- Nourishing flowerbeds and vegetable patches.



### Helps our environment

- Because home made compost produces 'peat-free' compost. This eradicates the need to buy peat products, which have been commercially sourced and extracted from peat bogs, resulting in the release of stored carbon from the bogs. Therefore by using kitchen scrap and garden waste to make compost, an individual can help to prevent climate change, and protect a valuable habitat.
- By putting less household waste out for collection, less energy is required as there are fewer vehicle movements, waste handling and industrial processes involved, and less waste going to landfill.







## Recipe for success

For composting to work properly, your bin needs both air and moisture. Air is essential to the composting process and by mixing the material, as you fill your bin, it will create air pockets and help keep your compost healthy.

The key to getting this right lies in getting the mix right - you need to keep your green waste and brown waste properly balanced. If your compost is too wet and gives off an odour, add more browns. If it's too dry and is not rotting, add some greens.



### The right ingredients:

#### Greens

- Tea bags
- Coffee grounds
- Veg peelings
- Salad leaves
- Fruit scraps
- Grass cuttings
- Old flowers and dead plants

#### Browns

- Dried leaves, twigs
- Wood chippings, straw
- Crushed egg shells
- Vacuum bag contents
- Cereal and egg boxes
- Toilet/ kitchen roll tubes
- Scrunched up paper



### The wrong ingredients:

- Cooked vegetables
- Meat
- Dairy products
- Diseased plants
- Dog mess or cat litter
- Baby's nappies



# Method

1. **Find the right site.** Ideally site your compost bin in the garden on bare soil. If space is limited, you can put your compost bin on concrete, tarmac or patio slabs; but make sure there's a layer of soil or existing compost on the bottom so garden creatures can colonise.
2. **Add the right ingredients.** Fill your kitchen caddy with everything from vegetable and fruit peelings to teabags, paper towels and egg shells. Take care not to compost cooked food, meat or fish.
3. **Fill it up.** Empty your kitchen caddy and your garden waste into your compost bin. A 50/50 mix of greens and browns is the perfect recipe for good compost.
4. **After 9-12 months.** The ingredients you have put in your compost bin should have turned into a dark brown, earthy smelling material at the bottom of the bin, which can be dug out leaving the newer material in the bin. But don't worry if your compost looks a little lumpy with twigs and bits of eggshells – this is perfectly normal. Simply sift out any larger bits and return them to your compost bin.
5. **Ready!** Once your compost resembles thick, moist soil and smells very earthy, it's ready to use.
6. **Collect the compost.** Instructions will be delivered with your bin. But all you have to do is lift the bin slightly or open the hatch at the bottom and scoop out the fresh compost with a garden fork or spade.
7. **Use it.** And watch your garden bloom. Compost can be used for all your planting needs – vegetable plants for allotments; general potting (if mixed with something like ordinary soil); flowerbeds and enriching new borders by mixing in existing soil; or around trees by spreading a layer around the roots. Or use it as mulch material, mix with a layer of soil, and help prevent plant diseases.