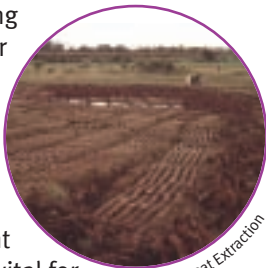


Composting

By making your own compost or buying peat-free commercial compost you will be helping to conserve peatlands - a very rare habitat in Northern Ireland. Peatlands are home to some of our most interesting wildlife including lizards, dragonflies and carnivorous plants!

Composting is one of the most visible ways in which you can make a difference in your garden. You will notice that you are putting less waste out for collection while a heap of fertile compost starts to accumulate! Compost is simply decomposed or rotted organic material. 'Organic' means that the material was once part of a living organism, whether plant or animal. Instead of going to landfill, composted organic waste becomes a brilliant natural resource, vital for healthy soil and great for garden wildlife.



Peat Extraction

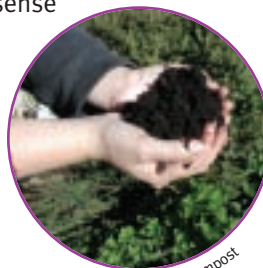
Why Make Your Own Compost?

- More than half of everything we throw away can be composted so it is DIY recycling at its best!
- You'll be helping save our peat bogs (home to rare and endangered wildlife) by not buying commercial compost, much of which contains peat that is stripped from our peat bogs.
- If everyone composted at home, the amount of rubbish going to landfill would be reduced and there would be less demand for opening new ones!
- Nutrient-rich composted organic waste is a very valuable resource. It can be used to feed your garden, vegetable patch, potted plants, greenhouse plants, window-box flowers etc. It is also an excellent soil conditioner that helps aerate the soil. This saves you money as you don't



Black Darter Dragonfly

- need to buy compost.
- Compost heaps can be home for fascinating wildlife, and can provide food for birds and hedgehogs.
- Modern compost bins mean making compost is hygienic – no nasty smells.
- You get a great sense of achievement from reducing your waste and helping the environment!



Compost

How to Compost - Getting set up

- Choose which type of compost heap/bin you want to use - a heap (just heap the material in a pile on the ground), a wooden bin (you can make a cheap bin out of nailed together wooden pallets), or a plastic bin (you can purchase a plastic bin from most garden centres).
- Place your bin on grass or soil to allow the necessary organisms to enter it. Digging the soil underneath where it is going to stand will make it easier for the bugs to get in and start their work.
- At the base of your compost heap or bin place a thick layer of coarse, woody prunings to help the air get in.
- Fork in layers of garden and kitchen waste, a 50:50 mix of wet 'green' stuff and dryer 'brown' material.
- Sprinkle with water if the heap seems dry, it needs to be as damp as a rung out sponge
- Cover to prevent moisture and heat loss - this will quicken the rotting process
- To speed composting mix the waste you are adding with grass cuttings, chicken manure or nettle tops, and add the occasional layer of soil e.g. when emptying plant pots
- BE PATIENT – compost takes between 6-12 months to rot down

What to Compost

Good compost needs a mix of two types of materials in approximately equal amounts -

- Damp 'green' materials such as weeds, grass cuttings and raw kitchen vegetable waste, tea bags, leftover bits of fruit, coffee grounds, old flowers.
- Drier 'brown' materials such as card, paper, leaves, loo rolls, twigs, sawdust, wood shavings, straw, prunings, paper towels, egg boxes, horse manure.

We would advise you not to compost -

- Meat, cooked left overs, dairy products, bread, cat/dog faeces, and barbeque or coal ashes.



Top 5 Composting Tips

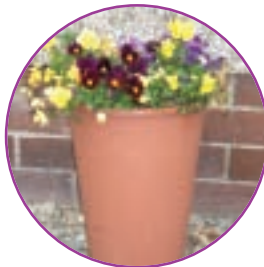
1. Use two compost bins at once, so that fresh waste can go into one while the other is left to rot down. This 'fill for six, rot for six' two-bin routine will give a fresh batch of lovely rich compost every six months.
2. The more waste you put in at once, and the hotter the weather, the quicker it composts.
3. To speed up the rotting process, empty the bin, mix the contents and put it all back again.
4. Shredding garden waste helps it to rot more quickly.
5. Collect paper based material such as scrunched cardboard tubes, egg boxes and tissues in your bucket of kitchen peelings and you will be pre-mixing your heap as you go along.

Just remember, composting is a natural process and even if you do nothing more than dump your organic waste in a heap, compost will eventually happen!

No garden, No compost?

If you want to do your bit by composting but don't have a garden, don't worry. There are ways you can compost -

- If you or someone in your household drinks tea, you can put the tea leaves from your used tea bags around the plants in window boxes or tubs to provide valuable nutrients and encourage growth.
- Wormeries can live on balconies or yards quite easily and will happily munch your kitchen waste and provide compost for window boxes and tubs.
- You may be able to collect and compost your organic materials in a local authority bin or amenity site.



been extracted from our peat bogs. These habitats and their associated wildlife are increasingly under threat, so please take the wildlife friendly option and only buy peat-free compost.



Bog Cotton

By composting your waste you will be helping to decrease the amount of waste that goes to landfill, you will be helping to preserve our peat bogs and their special wildlife by using your home made compost rather than the peat based commercial ones, and you will be providing a brilliant home in your garden for millions of creepy crawlies!

Peat Free Compost

If you need to use compost in your garden and don't want to make your own, then buying bags of compost is an easy option. However many commercial composts are peat based, which has

You can download more Make Space for Nature information guides from our website www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org or contact us on 028 44830282 or email info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org.