



# Access Waste Recycling

## Home Composting Guide

### What is Home Composting?

Composting is a controlled process of decomposing organic material. The mix of waste is broken down by naturally occurring soil micro-organisms as well as larger feeders like worms and beetles. In the home, it can be achieved by mixing different types of household waste in a plastic, open-bottomed container placed on soil in the garden. The material is then left for nature to do its work. As the months pass, you will be rewarded with rich compost that can be used around the garden.

### Why do it?

By home composting you can take up to 20% of the weight out of your black bin, preventing this waste from ending up in landfill. Also by doing it at home, you are reducing the need for refuse collection vehicles out on the roads. Particularly if your black bin service is operated by Pay-By-Weight, you can maximise savings by reducing the weight of your black bin. On top of all this, you are providing yourself with a rich material ideal for use in your own garden or your neighbour's.



### Getting Started

Start off by placing the bin somewhere convenient in the garden for ease of use in winter rain. The bin should ideally be placed on an area of bare soil, but it can be placed on a grassy area, if the surface is broken first by lightly digging. The process works best with a bit of heat, so if possible, place the bin in partial sun/shade.

To start off, put in a layer of coarse garden waste, such as leaves, a little loose soil, some bits of cardboard or eggboxes and some vegetable peels – a good mix to start with.

After this, more materials (explained on the next page) can be added as you have them.

**Phone 01 450 0830 or e-mail [info@accesswaste.ie](mailto:info@accesswaste.ie) for more information**

## What can be composted?

### Yes

#### Garden Waste

Prunings, chippings (not evergreen plants)  
Grass cuttings  
Dead plants/flowers  
Pond clearings/algae  
Leaves

#### Kitchen Waste

Uncooked food scraps  
Fruit and Veg peelings  
Coffee grounds  
Tea Bags  
Egg shells

#### Household

Vacuum/hover bag contents  
Eggboxes, paper  
Tissues, paper towels  
Pet waste from VEGETARIAN pets e.g.  
rabbits/hamsters etc

### No

#### Garden Waste

Barbeque/Coal Ashes  
Evergreen or conifer plants/prunings

#### Kitchen Waste

Any meat, cooked or raw  
Any fish, cooked or raw  
Cooked food scraps  
Oil/Grease  
Dairy Products

#### Household

Cat or Dog manure/faeces  
Cat litter  
Plastics/Metals

### For best results;

- A good mix of “green” materials (grass, tea bags, peelings, flowers) should be balanced with some woody materials (prunings, newspaper, tissues, Hoover contents).
- Food waste should be mixed with other waste when being added.
- Place waste in alternate layers of wet green waste and drier woody waste.

## What can I use the compost for?

When your compost is well rotted it will look dark brown/black. It is ideal as a soil improver that can be spread on flower beds or vegetable patches. It can be used virtually anywhere there is bare soil. Try mixing it with garden soil and sand to make a potting mix for your baskets and pots. If you're feeling very adventurous, make a liquid feed by soaking half a bucket of compost in water, and using it on all your plants.

## **Trouble shooting**

### ***My compost is taking ages to decompose***

It may take many months, even up to year to produce good compost. Be patient; make sure the mix isn't too dry. To speed up the process, follow the guidelines given for positioning your bin and try turning the mix regularly, even once a week.

### ***Do I have to turn the compost?***

Turning the compost isn't necessary but it will speed up the process.

### ***My compost is slimy/soggy and smells***

There is probably too much nitrogen-rich materials like grass clippings which are heavy and leaves no room for air to move in the bin. Add more soil and tough woody materials or paper to help absorb some moisture and create more air pockets in the bin.

### ***There are slugs and flies in my bin***

Slugs are just another of the creatures that aid the composting process. If you have any tender plants in the garden susceptible to slug attack, the compost bin will actually distract them.

If you are getting a lot of flies, try adding a 5-10cm layer of torn up paper or grass clippings on top and leaving the lid open for a few hours.

### ***I think I have a rodent getting into the bin***

Only occasionally will you have animals near the bin. Rodents aren't attracted to compost bins but you may see them as most gardens in Ireland have resident rodents. If this is of concern, place the compost bin on a sheet of wire mesh with the edges turned up to prevent any animals getting into the bin. Mice in a compost bin are no more harmful than anywhere else in a garden and like any gardening activity, remember to wash your hands afterwards.

### ***The material is very dry and nothing seems to be happening***

This is common if the bin isn't being used enough. Try to get a good mix of fresh veg and fruit skins, tea bags, even damp paper. If there are a lot of prunings or dry grass, water the top, add a layer of grass and some fresh material. Then turn the mix, and turn again once a week for a few weeks.

***For more information or if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call our offices and ask our staff***

Acknowledgements: "The Rotter's Guide to Home Composting" by Moira Byrne and produced By Wicklow County Council and ENFO

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