

# WASTE

**Around 30% of our household waste is organic and can be recycled into compost.**

## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Composting is an ancient technology. It was introduced by the Romans about 2000 years ago as a way to build up the fertility of the soil.

Compost is an essential ingredient for good soil.

it brings fertility to the earth,  
 improves structure of the soil,  
 improves the drainage,  
 breaks up clay,  
 binds sand.

In twelve months an average kitchen in Northern Ireland produces around 200 Kilos of waste, with the average garden producing much, much more.

If this waste is thrown straight into the bin its potential value is lost and it will go straight to landfill where it will not only take up valuable space but it will also decompose releasing gases and liquids which have the potential to harm the environment.

Our organic waste is a valuable commodity which may be used in the production of a prime quality compost.

## HOW DO I START?

Compost can be made by leaving material in a heap or in a bin. The method you choose may depend on the size of your garden, the amount of material you have to compost or the amount of compost you require.

A compost heap should be at least one metre square and one metre high.

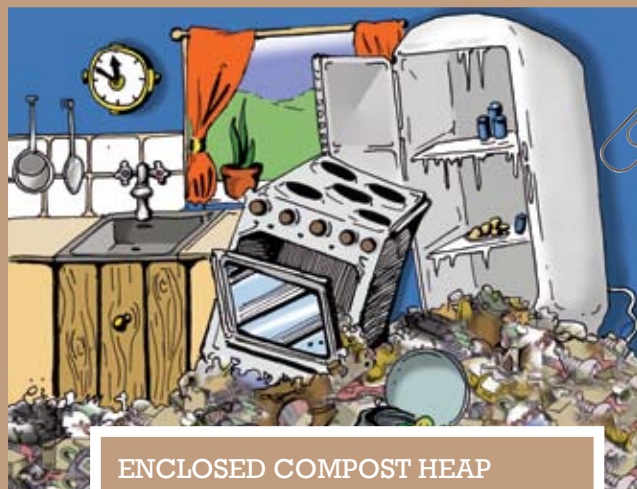
If possible it should be enclosed with brick or timber and covered to keep the rain out. Space should be left at the front, giving room to turn the heap.

Compost bins are a better option for smaller gardens. They may be purchased from garden centres. Many local councils may offer them at a subsidised price. The bin is open ended to allow earth worms to enter the material and help speed up the process.

If neither of these is a feasible option, your local council may run a community composting scheme where you can take your waste along to a massive compost heap which is managed by them.

Your compost heap should be easily accessible, for example it may be convenient to have two compost areas, one near the back door for kitchen waste and one in the garden to collect material there.

### KITCHEN WASTE



### ENCLOSED COMPOST HEAP



INDUSTRIAL COMPOSTING



COMPOST CONTAINER

# COMPOSTING WASTE

## WHAT SHOULD I PUT IN MY COMPOST BIN/HEAP?

### DO put in

- lawn clippings,
- shredded stalks,
- vegetable peelings,
- hedge clippings,
- cut flowers,
- teabags,
- leaves,
- egg shells.

### Do NOT put in

- diseased plants,
- plastics,
- glass,
- cooked food (including meat and fish),
- weeds,
- coloured glossy paper,
- pet droppings.

For best results a good mixture of waste is needed and any large woody material should be chopped up.



## THE COMPOSTING PROCESS

There are three types of organisms involved in the composting process; fungi, bacteria and actinomycetes (bacteria that branch).

These organisms begin to grow all over the material and their biological activity begins to break down the waste. This produces heat, further increasing the activity of the bacteria.

Once the bacteria have used up all the starch and sugars the temperature begins to fall again, creating an environment more favourable for the fungi, which then begin breaking down any woody material.

Composting can take weeks or months depending on how much air and moisture are present.

The compost is ready to use when it is crumbly in appearance and has a slightly earthy smell.

Your compost can then be used in your garden, improving plant health, growth and, increasing yields of fruit, vegetables, flowers and herbs.

By using compost you have helped the environment by reducing the need for toxic chemicals and pesticides and increased the nutritional value of home grown foods.

You have also helped save our natural bogland which is a finite resource used in the commercial production of compost, and finally you have, of course, saved yourself money.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.wakeuptowaste.org](http://www.wakeuptowaste.org) is the DoE website for the Wake up to Waste campaign.

The NIEA website is at [www.ni-environment.gov.uk](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk) and contains information on the NI Waste Strategy and legislation.

[www.wastewatch.org.uk](http://www.wastewatch.org.uk) you can download or print other factsheets.

[www.recycledproducts.org.uk](http://www.recycledproducts.org.uk) has some information on products made from recycled

[www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk) has information on composting organic material and standards.

[www.compost.org.uk](http://www.compost.org.uk) The Compost Association site

Our aim is to protect, conserve and promote the natural and built environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
Klondyke Building  
Cromac Avenue  
Gasworks Business Park  
Belfast BT7 2JA  
T. 0845 302 0008

[www.ni-environment.gov.uk](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk)