



Composting for Schools

Why?

You can reduce the amount of waste which is put into the school dustbins by composting green or vegetable waste which otherwise would end up in landfill sites. Compostable waste causes the production of methane, a gas which can contribute to global warming - so producing compost helps the environment.

The compost which you produce can be used to feed and improve the soil in school flower beds, vegetable plots and containers. Compost is a complete and natural food for your soil and it's free.

How?

Use plastic buckets with lids for collecting compostable waste from classrooms, the staff room and the school kitchen. These amounts could be weighed and recorded for data handling activities.

You will need to construct or purchase compost containers - it works well to have at least two containers; one being filled and the other full of waste that is breaking down, which can then be emptied and used.

There are several designs of containers to choose from, but a lid is essential because the aim is:

- to keep the waste tidy
- to retain heat, speeding up the decomposition
- to keep rain out, preventing water-logging and stopping nutrients from being washed out.

Build your own compost bins: use wood (perhaps old pallets?) and nails to make a timber frame - this will need to be roughly a metre square and a metre high - and fix this to posts driven into the ground. It is useful to have one side which can be opened like a gate for easy access. Then cover the frame with a heavy plastic sheet or a piece of carpet and create a lid to keep the rain out.

Where?

Compost containers should be located in a "tucked away" position, but must also be easily accessible in all weather conditions.

Position compost containers in a sunny, well drained area on bare soil or grass.

Avoid areas exposed to cold winds.



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What?

These are some of the things you should and shouldn't put into your composter:

GOOD

Raw vegetable peelings
Fruit cores and skins—avoid too many citrus remains
Tea bags
Old plants and flowers
Egg shells (crushed)
Grass cuttings (in small quantities)
Torn or shredded paper/soft card
Straw and sawdust

BAD

Meat or fish
Fat
Dairy Products
Evergreen leaves
Prickly materials
Coloured or shiny paper
Any cooked food

In hot weather it may be necessary to add water - your compost should be moist, but not soggy!

Aerate your compost; turn the materials occasionally or add a little crumpled newspaper.

Keep the lid on to insulate the container - the greater the heat, the quicker the composting process.

A good mix of materials is essential.

After between three and nine months - depending on the season - your compost will be ready to use.

For further details on composting, visit the HDRA Organic Organisation at www.gardenorganic.org.uk.

For further details on how to purchase compost bins at discount prices, visit www.wasteaware.org.uk/compost.cfm or phone the manufacturer Blackwall on 0870 844 3020.

Contact Sue for more information on how she can help you maximise the potential of your school grounds:

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