

Frequently Asked Questions about Composting

What is garden compost?

Compost looks like rich, dark soil. It is made of recycled kitchen and garden waste. It is used to feed and condition the soil and in making potting mixes.

Is homemade compost the same as multipurpose compost?

No. Sowing, potting and multipurpose composts that you buy in garden centres are mixtures of various materials such as sand, coir and fertilisers. These are used for raising seedlings and growing plants in pots.

Is composting a lot of work?

Making compost can be as easy as putting a few grass cuttings and vegetable scraps onto a compost heap or you can put a lot of effort into it. It's up to you.

How long does it take?

Compost can be made in six to eight weeks, but usually it takes a year or more. In general, the more effort you put in, the quicker you will get compost. If you put minimum effort in, it will probably take about 18 months to make compost.

Will a compost heap breed pests?

Compost is made by a host of small and microscopic creatures. These are not pests and will not overrun your garden.

Is compost safe to handle?

Yes, if the usual garden hygiene rules are followed. Keep cuts covered, wash hands before eating and keep your anti-tetanus protection up to date.

Why is my compost black, slimy and smelly?

It's probably got too much green material, too much water and not enough air in it. Mix it with brown material; add sawdust or shredded paper to absorb some of the water, and make sure it has a good air circulation. Give it a stir occasionally with a fork or broom handle.

Why is my compost a big dry heap of twigs?

Probably because it's made up of too much brown, woody material, and isn't moist enough. This isn't a common problem in small gardens, but if your heap is like this, try to shred the contents, add some green material, and water it.

My compost is infested with woodlice!

This is ok, but it can indicate the heap is too dry. Give it a good mix, and add some water if needed.

My compost has small white worms - is this a problem

No! The worms are probably 'potworms' and are not a problem, although they may indicate your compost is a bit acidic. They can also be used as a tropical fish food!

Will I get rats in my compost heap or bin?

Compost heaps don't necessarily attract rats, however if there are rats in the area, they will probably visit the heap now and then. If your area has a vermin problem, don't put food waste on the heap. Call your district council for help on vermin problems.

Any other questions?

If you have any other questions, please [contact the Let's Waste Less team](#). One of our team will reply as soon as possible.

Further advice is also available at:

- www.recyclenow.com/home_composting/get_advice/index.html
- www.gardenorganic.org.uk/composting/index.php