

What can I compost?

Anything that was once living will compost, but some items are best avoided. Meat, dairy and cooked food can attract vermin and should not be home-composted. Some things, like grass mowings and soft young weeds, rot quickly. They work as 'activators', getting the composting started, but on their own will decay to a smelly mess. Older and tougher plant material is slower to rot but gives body to the finished compost - and usually makes up the bulk of a compost heap. Woody items decay very slowly; they are best chopped or shredded first, where appropriate. For best results, use a mixture of types of ingredient. The right balance is something you learn by experience, but a rough guide is to use equal amounts by volume of greens and browns (see below).

Compost ingredients

An example of some of the ingredients you can add to your compost bin:

'Greens' (nitrogen-rich ingredients)

- Grass cuttings
- Young weeds
- Nettles (not roots)
- Comfrey leaves
- Urine (ideally diluted 20:1)
- Uncooked fruit and vegetable peelings
- Tea bags, leaves and coffee grounds
- Soft green prunings
- Animal manure from herbivores eg cows and horses
- Poultry manure

'Browns' (carbon-rich ingredients)

- Cardboard eg cereal packets, toilet roll tubes and egg boxes
- Waste paper and junk mail, including shredded confidential waste
- Paper towels & bags
- Bedding (hay, straw, shredded paper, wood shavings) from vegetarian pets eg rabbits and guinea pigs
- Tough hedge clippings
- Woody prunings
- Old bedding plants
- Straw

Other compostable items

- Wood ash, in moderation
- Hair, nail clippings
- Egg shells
- Natural fibres, e.g. wool and cotton

Do NOT compost

- Meat, fish, dairy products or cooked food
- Coal & coke ash
- Cat litter
- Dog faeces
- Disposable nappies
- Plastics
- Petrochemicals