

Composting Chronicle

Welcome to the summer edition of the Composting Chronicle. With the warmer weather and longer days it's the perfect time to be out and about in your garden and get the most out of your compost bin.

We would also like to thank those members who opted to receive future editions of the Chronicle by email and encourage others to do this by emailing recycle@leics.gov.uk.

Snap up a bargain bin



Is your compost bin looking a bit tired or do you need a second one to cope with your compostable waste?

Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council offer a variety of compost bins at fantastic prices. A 220 litre bin costs £8 with a 330 litre bin costing only £9.50, plus a £5.49 delivery charge per order.

There is also an amazing **buy one get one half price** offer making the bins even more affordable.

If you would like to place an order call **0844 571 4444** or visit www.getcomposting.com.



Summertime tips

Tip 1 During the summer it's tempting to fill your compost bin with grass cuttings, however when added in large amounts it prevents air from circulating. Freshly trimmed grass has a higher level of nitrogen and moisture; this can make your bin slimy and smelly. Taking a few simple precautions will prevent this and keep your bin healthy during the summer.

When adding grass cuttings the three key things to remember are:

1. Add them in thin layers
2. Mix them with drier materials such as paper, straw and egg boxes
3. Create extra air pockets by adding scrunched up paper

Tip 2 If you notice lots of ants or woodlice in your compost bin it could be an indication that it is too dry. Try adding wetter materials such as grass or fruit and vegetable peelings or leave the lid off to allow a little rain in.

Tip 3 During the summer months many people see an increase in fruit flies in their compost bin. To avoid this try covering fruit with a thin layer of soil, sawdust or damp newspaper when you add it.

Grass Cycling

By Master Composter Meg Galley-Taylor

A simple way to deal with grass clippings to avoid over filling your compost bin is to just leave them on the lawn by removing the collector box or bag from your lawnmower. This is known as grass cycling and provides a number of benefits to your lawn as well as being an alternative way to dispose of the clippings.

These grass clippings will first dehydrate before decomposing and disappearing from view within a couple of weeks. They act as natural fertilizers as the grass has high nitrogen content which feeds the soil microbes, and can provide up to 30% of your lawn's fertilizer needs.

The key to successful grass cycling is 'mow high, mow dry, mow often, leave the clippings'.

- **Mow high** - taller grass encourages the roots to grow deeper and stronger and the tall grass tends to shade out weeds. Keep the grass 5 to 7.5 cm (2-3 inches) long
- **Mow dry** - cut the grass with a sharp blade and only when the grass is dry. Wet grasses will clog up your lawn mower and leave soggy mats of grass on the lawn to kill the grass
- **Mow often** - this keeps the grass clippings short so they don't clump and will break down easily
- **Leave the clippings**

If you don't use it...

freeuse it

Want to find a hidden treasure or give away your unwanted items all for free?

Freeuseit.org offers a simple, free and easy way for residents to advertise items they no longer want, or to pick up items they need.

It's estimated that £5.6 billion pounds worth of good quality usable household items are thrown away in the UK every year. The website has already saved over 53 tonnes of unwanted items from landfill.

Visit www.freeuseit.org for more information and to start giving and taking items for free!





COMPOST

CORNER

now
open!

Compost Corner at Snibston Discovery Museum, our new educational exhibition, is a great place to learn more about composting, see bins you could buy, learn how to make your own and pick up tips and advice from our Master Composters.

Master Composters will be available to offer personalised advice, call **0116 305 7005** to find out when they will next be at Compost Corner.

To visit Compost Corner you will need to purchase entrance tickets to Snibston Discovery Museum visit www.snibston.com for more information.



Ask the Expert

We have asked our expert Master Composters, volunteers trained in all things compost, their advice on the following seasonal question. If you have a question for our Master Composters please send it in to recycle@leics.gov.uk



How can I use my home made compost around the garden this summer?



Tony Curtis has been a Master Composter since November 2008 and suggests mulching.

"In summer there is a need to preserve moisture around plants, fruit and veg in particular, but also any summer bedding and plants which need moisture and good soil. The best and easiest way to use your home-made compost is to make sure your plants are well watered and then add compost around them to help retain moisture and suppress weeds. This is known as mulching and will concentrate your compost where it will do the most good. As and when the worms pull the compost down into the soil or your pesky black birds throw the compost around then top up as necessary. Let nature incorporate the compost for you."



Roger Lyons, a Master Composter, recommends using your home made compost for potting your home grown vegetables.

"Your compost will work really well as a mulch, but is even better for potting - on tomato plants planted in a bucket with the base removed, or on courgettes and cucumbers. I'm sure there are more nutrients available to the plants than would be found in bought composts."

