



Composting

CHRONICLE

Autumn/Winter 2015

Hello & welcome to the latest Composting Chronicle with tips and ideas to help you keep composting through the cold and dark months and be ready for the spring.

The Spring/Summer Composting Chronicle will be part of an e-newsletter to keep you up to date on all things Waste in Leicestershire.

Featuring:

- pictures of the new Compost Demonstration Site at Leicester University Botanic Gardens
- winners of the Compost Awareness Week poster and photograph competitions
- Master Composters and what they have been up to over the last few months

Stepping away from composting a little, we've got news about the new Leicestershire & Rutland Reuse Network – a great way of finding a new home for things that need one and maybe just what you need if you're having a pre-Christmas clear-out.

As always, we'd like to thank everyone who contributed material for this edition. If you've got any queries, comments or suggestions please send them in to wasteprevention@leics.gov.uk



Autumn/Winter composting tips



- Don't add all the autumn prunings at once – if you can/or have room keep them in a dry place and add bit-by-bit. Save some for next summer as they will be a good balance for all the grass cuttings.
- Create some space in the bin by harvesting your compost from the bottom. Either transfer the compost to a second bin to mature or put it into black plastic sacks. It's best used in spring as the winter rains will leach most of the nutrients away.
- This is the best time to relocate the bin, especially if it's the Dalek type. Lift it off, knock the uncomposted material onto a tarpaulin and save the compost that's ready (see above). Put the bin somewhere it'll catch whatever winter sun there is (and not too far from the kitchen door). Lining the inside with corrugated cardboard helps to insulate the bin and provides air pockets for the bugs. Put a small amount of mature compost at the bottom along with some twigs to help provide some air and then add the unfinished material.
- Collect fallen leaves separately where possible to make leafmould. A black plastic sack will do – just put them in, moisten them if they're dry, put a few holes in the bag with a fork and then put it in a corner and leave it for two years. Because it's such a slow process, it's better to keep different years' leaves separate.
- If possible, insulate the bin. Bubble wrap works well and some composters have their own (expensive) purpose-made jackets. Old carpet works well on top of an open heap. Wormeries must come in to a garage, outhouse or utility room or the worms will die.
- Keep adding nitrogen-rich materials, such as weeds or vegetable peelings over the winter to keep the contents warm but make sure it gets a good stir to keep everything aerated.
- Don't worry if the compost appears to completely stop – it will get going again in the spring.

New Composting Site at the Botanical Garden

The new composting demonstration site is now open at the University of Leicester Botanical Garden, Glebe Road, Oadby. The site shows a range of compost bins, wormeries and food digesters and composting techniques to demonstrate the ease with which garden and kitchen waste, including cooked food, can be converted into nutrient rich compost and liquid fertilizers such as compost, nettle and comfrey tea. Master Composters are normally available on Saturday afternoons to answer questions and guide visitors around exhibits.

The range of bins include:

- **Home-made Pallet Compost Bin.** Simple bins suitable for allotment use.
- **Lasagne Composting.** A form of sheet composting with alternate layers of greens and browns (cardboard).
- **Grass Boarding.** Sheet composting using alternate layers of grass and cardboard or similar paper waste.
- **Hugelkultur Mound.** This permaculture technique involves the creation of a combined raised bed and compost heap which is said to remain fertile for up to 6 years. The base material used in the bottom of the trench can include logs or other wood.
- **Leaf mould** in wire bins, a 'Netlon' compost bin and polythene sacks.
- **WOW** wooden observational compost bin and wormery
- **Tekplas Compost Bin.** A uPVC bin that looks like a conventional New Zealand box.
- **Tyre Bin.** A simple and cheap compost bin made out of old tyres lined with cardboard for added insulation.
- **Blackwall "Dalek" compost bins.** Inexpensive basic compost bins made from recycled plastic in two sizes. Available at a discount price through LCC. Two of these bins are being used to demonstrate common mistakes when composting where the mix of greens and browns is wrong.
- **"Dalek" bin with sliding hatch.** For easy access to the compost by means of a sliding hatch.
- **Thermo King, Komp 250.** Both with easy access door and lid.
- **Earthmaker.** A three chamber vertical composting unit that uses gravity to aerate material as it tumbles from one chamber to another.
- **Compost tumblers and rolling bins.** Showing rapid composting systems where the compost is aerated by moving the bin.



There are great examples of cooked food waste composting including the **Green Johanna, Green Cone food digester, Hotbin composters** and a **Jora 125 composter**.

There is a fascinating selection of wormeries showing an original single chamber wormery, **Can-O-Worms, Wormcity, Bubbleworks herb stack** and a **dog poo wormery**. Liquid fertilizers include **worm wee fertilizer, comfrey teas** and **aerated compost tea**.

A virtual tour of the site is available at www.carryoncomposting.com

For more information on the botanical gardens visit: www2.le.ac.uk/institution/botanic-garden



Spread the word

Become an expert in composting and raise awareness of its benefits.

Find out more about master composters at www.lesswaste.org.uk/master_composter or call 0116 305 7005.



Turn your green waste into tasty crops

Buy a cut price compost bin

from only **£10.98**

www.getcomposting.com



Reuse has been made easier

Have you ever had something that you no longer needed that you would have liked to have given a second life to but you just couldn't get round to it because you thought it would be too much hassle? Maybe you felt it was just easier to take it to the waste site (tip)?

Reuse in Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland has just been made easier.

A number of local reuse groups that provide furniture, electricals and other household goods at affordable prices to local families in need have come together to form the LeicesterShire & Rutland Reuse Network (LRRN). They now have a single local call phone number (0330 355 0707) you can call to arrange for your item to be collected for free.

LRRN have also set up a new website (www.lrrn.org) to make it easier to donate items to the reuse charities, to find out about what items they have for sale and what volunteering opportunities are available.

The intention is to have more local reuse groups and charities join the network over time and provide more reuse information on the website allowing it to become a one stop shop for reuse information.

So, if you are thinking of having a clear out before Christmas, why not donate and make a difference? Find out how you could give your unwanted items a new lease of life and make a difference to local families in need.

Call 0330 355 0707 or visit their website at www.lrrn.org



You can also donate your items to local charity shops and please do - especially if you have a favourite. Find out where they are located by visiting www.charityretail.org.uk



LeicesterShire and Rutland

Reuse
network

Master Composters spread the word

The summer season has been a hive of activity for Master Composters getting out and about across Leicestershire. They have been visiting demonstration sites, County shows, school open days, open gardens, community gardens and village fetes.

Events included:

June – 'I Love Market Harborough' and Melton Country Fair

July – Market Bosworth Show and Rempstone Steam & Country Show

August – Skyride as part of the City Festival, Food Gusto at Appleby Magna and the Wood Fair at Beacon Hill

September saw presence at Woodhouse Eaves Horticultural Show (Sat 5 Sept), South Leicestershire Freshers' Fair (Thurs 10 Sept) and Leics Pride Festival (Sat 5 – Mon 14 Sept)

October will see MCs at the Melton Mowbray Food Festival (Sat 3 – Sun 4 Oct)

Why not let us know of the events you attended in your local area, take a look on the website or 'like' our Facebook page and we can feature you on the sites. You could also tweet or re-tweet your activities.

 [/LeicestershireRecycling](https://www.facebook.com/LeicestershireRecycling)

 [/leicscountyhall](https://twitter.com/leicscountyhall)

For information about other volunteering opportunities visit www.leics.gov.uk/volunteering

 [/VolunteerInLeics](https://twitter.com/VolunteerInLeics)



Competition winners

To mark Compost Awareness Week in May, Master Composters ran two free competitions to raise awareness of home composting.

The first was a poster-making competition, open to schools and individuals aged up to 17. The winner was Aidan Buck, aged 11, of Snarestone Primary School.



There was also a photo competition, open to photographic societies, schools and gardeners, was won by Gary Hartley of Eastleigh in Hampshire.



The competitions will be run again in 2016 for Compost Awareness Week (May 1st – 7th) and you'll find more information at www.carryoncomposting.com if you'd like to enter.

Soil in the bag

Why not try this easy method to get composting and spread the word to those who have never tried it before. It's quick, it's simple, it's in a bag. This simple composting method is just for fun and will take only 4-6 weeks to complete.

Equipment

A plastic bag (no holes in the bottom) that is water tight. A twist-tie for sealing. A small bag can be kept anywhere and will not take up too much space – ideal for those who tell you they have no space to compost. The bag can be placed in a drawer, tied to a rack, placed in a sack or even hung on a hook.

Low maintenance

Once filled, the bag can be left alone, although the contents will enjoy a regular squeeze.

Ingredients

Vegetable peelings, coffee grounds or tea leaves (optional), ½ cup of soil for starter micro-organisms (not sterile potting compost), 300ml of water, 1 tbsp of 100% alfalfa meal or 100% alfalfa pellets (often fed to rabbits or hamsters). These can be found at any good pet shops, usually sold as rabbit food.

Microscopic Visitors

The visitors to this compost will be microscopic and not the fat juicy worm types. These visitors will be the beneficial bacteria, the smallest of all compost creatures.

Method

Finely chop your vegetable peelings and pour them into the bag. Add coffee grounds and tea leaves if you have them. Add the soil. Add the water. Add alfalfa pellets (high in nitrogen and help stimulate the composting process). SHAKE bag vigorously. Squeeze every day. Every other day leave the bag open to let the air in. If your vegetable peelings get too smelly, they may be too wet or in need of more squeezing. Try adding a little bit of shredded cardboard to soak up some water.

Home-made compost looks a little different to the stuff you see on TV shows. If your result looks like a dark, rich crumbly soil this is fine and also there will be stray bits of uncomposted materials. These can be picked out and added to the next lot of compost you make.

Visuals of good compost can be found at: www.recyclenow.com/home_composting

