



# Composting Chronicle

## Spring into Action

Spring has arrived and it is the perfect time for new beginnings, which is the theme of this edition of the Composting Chronicle.

We will be telling you all about the newest technology in composting, as well as helping you get back into composting after the cold winter.

### Green Johanna - The 'Rolls Royce' of Composting

A compost bin that produces a compost after just six months, takes cooked food waste and garden waste and can provide compost all year round. Sounds too good to be true? Well that's exactly what the Green Johanna food waste digester can do!

The Green Johanna is a fully enclosed 'hot' composter that is designed to sit in a shady position in the garden, and accepts all cooked and uncooked food waste to produce a rich compost.

The bin uses an advanced ventilation system, which allows the contents to reach significantly higher temperatures than other composters.

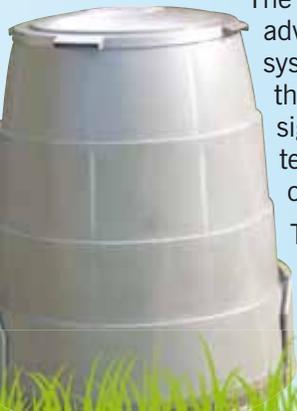
This helps speed up the composting process meaning

you will get your first lot of homemade compost in a record breaking 6 months!

As the bin is fully sealed, including a base plate, it prevents unwanted pests whilst still allowing helpful creatures such as worms to get in. This means food which cannot be added to your normal compost bin, can safely be added to the Green Johanna further reducing the amount of waste we send to landfill.

This fantastic bin can be purchased from Leicestershire County Council at the subsidised price of **£39.95\***. To purchase your Green Johanna please call our dedicated order line on **0800 019 2061** or order online at **[www.greatgreensystems.com](http://www.greatgreensystems.com)**

\* Offer only available to Leicestershire residents – excluding Leicester City.



# Kick Start your Compost



Some of you may be confident and seasoned composters, but every week people join our Rot-A-Lot club who are completely new to composting and are looking for tips and advice.

Our top advice for an effective compost bin is getting the balance between 'greens' and 'browns' right.

<b>Greens:</b>	<b>Browns:</b>
Wet materials (nitrogen rich)	Dry materials (carbon rich)
✓ Tea bags and coffee grounds	✓ Paper and newspaper
✓ Old flowers	✓ Dry leaves, twigs and hedge clippings
✓ Vegetables	✓ Straw and hay
✓ Fruit scraps	✓ Cereal boxes, toilet and kitchen roll tubes



## The Science...

The green materials contain bacteria and moisture to help kick start the composting process. Too many greens in the compost bin will make the waste too moist and stop air from circulating amongst the compost. Not only will this slow the composting process down, but it could lead to unpleasant odours. If your bin is sludgy or contains lots of damp clumps, you need to add more browns and ensure the compost is well ventilated.

Browns tend to be drier and contain plenty of nitrogen, vital to high quality compost. Compost bins with too many browns provide a great home for ants and woodlice, but tend to compost very slowly. Add a few extra greens to the mix to speed up the composting process. Brown items such as crunched paper and card are vital to creating the perfect compost as they create air pockets.

The ideal compost bin will contain a balance of greens and brown, and will be home to a variety of creepy-crawlies. The mixture will be slightly moist and contain air pockets.



# Compost Awareness Week

International Compost Awareness Week runs from 1st – 7th May this year and is a fantastic opportunity to find out more about home composting.

Why not come and see us at one of our roadshows that week? Along with our Master Composters, we will be out around the County during the week to answer your composting questions, give expert advice and to showcase our great selection of subsidised home compost bins.

Look out for our roadshow dates, locations and view our selection of subsidised bins at [www.leics.gov.uk/composting](http://www.leics.gov.uk/composting)



Would you like to learn new skills, meet new people and take part in an exciting new scheme?

**Waste Action**  
**Volunteers**

We are looking to recruit and train 20 people to become Waste Action Volunteers – experts who help residents reduce the amount of rubbish they send to landfill.

Why get involved:

- Learn new skills and gain experience to add to your CV
- Meet new people and make new friends
- Get involved in your local area

The initial training course will focus on Home Composting, Love Food Hate Waste (a National campaign to help reduce food waste) and Food Waste Digesters. Additional e-learning modules will be available if you are interested in expanding your knowledge further.

Visit [www.lesswaste.org.uk](http://www.lesswaste.org.uk) or call **0116 305 7005** for more information and an application form, closing dates for applications Monday 11th April.

The course is open to all Leicestershire residents (excluding Leicester City) aged 18 and over.





# Master Composters

If you require advice about a particular aspect of composting, or would like to speak to someone about a problem with your compost, we have a fantastic group of experts who are passionate about composting and are here to help answer any of your questions. They can help you choose the right bin, help you set up or locate your new compost bin, as well as giving you technical advice on getting the most from your compost bin.

If you would like to speak to a Master Composter in your area call **0116 305 7005**.

The Master Composters are also available for talks or events if you are keen to help spread the composting message to your local community.



## Give and Take Day

Sunday 10th April, 10am - 2pm

at **Snibston Discovery Museum, Coalville**

### What can be given?

Between 10am - 1pm bring unwanted items that are of good quality and in working order, such as books, toys, kitchenware and bric-a-brac.

For health and safety reasons electrical items cannot be accepted.

### What can be taken?

Come between 10.45am - 2pm and take anything you need and could use.

For more information visit [www.lesswaste.org.uk](http://www.lesswaste.org.uk) or call **0116 305 7005**



# Ask the Expert

Need any advice from Sallie, Waste Reduction Adviser, from WRAP? Send your questions to [recycle@leics.gov.uk](mailto:recycle@leics.gov.uk).

## This month's question:



I have heavy clay soil in my garden; can I change it by adding compost?



A

**YES!** Soil is made up of minerals, organic matter, moisture and air. It is the minerals (proportions of sand/silt/clay) that determine the soil texture, and this is very difficult to change. However you can influence the structure of the soil, which is how the mineral particles and organic matter hold together.

It's really useful to know your soil texture because different soils need to be handled differently to get the best out of them. Although clay soil often contains a good supply of nutrients it tends to have poor drainage, being cold and heavy when wet and hard and cracked when dry.

Adding your compost to the surface of a clay soil, or top few centimetres, will help it to bind together to form crumbs. This will improve drainage, increase aeration, feed the soil and provide spaces for plant roots and soil organisms to live. It will help the soil to warm up quicker in the spring and generally make the soil easier to handle.

### It will also help the structure of a clay soil if you:

- Dig the soil in the autumn to allow frost and the weather to break up the clay, (although avoid digging when the soil is frozen or very wet).
- Avoid walking on the soil, especially when it's wet, as this will cause compaction and damage the good structure that you're trying to build.
- Keep the soil surface covered, either with crops, mulch, or a green manure; keeping a clay soil covered helps it retain moisture in the summer so prevents it from drying out. It also protects the soil surface and keeps the soil warmer in the cold months. Growing crops helps to remove excess moisture from the clay soil through the natural moisture loss through plant leaves and stems.
- If drainage is very poor then you may benefit from double digging which is a way of cultivating the soil to a depth of 2 spades which will help break up the compacted subsoil below.

