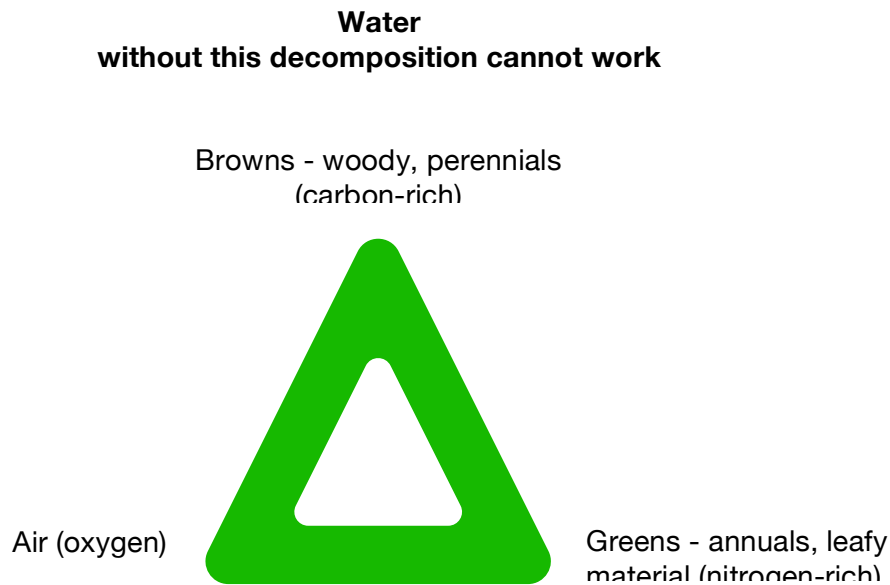


What is Composting?

Making compost involves the decomposition of plants by micro-organisms. The triangle shows the essential materials required in this process.



Where to start

Get initial instruction about what needs to be done and where.

The compost bays are numbered. Compost heaps are initially built in the outermost i.e. 1 or 5.

How to start

Gather separate piles of Brown and Green materials close to the bin you will be filling.

Browns: Twigs up to 1cm diameter and no more than approx.30cm length. Exclude thorny stuff.

Greens: Exclude pernicious weeds e.g. nettle, bindweed, couch grass, dandelions and dock etc. (Put excluded material in the drowning bins marked with a green label, behind the compost bays).

Have water to hand (hose or cans). Find out if there's any farmyard manure available; if not, use a small quantity of immature compost from another heap.

Build the heap with alternating layers of Browns and Greens about 10-12 cm deep. After each Brown layer add water. The quantity will depend on how dry/wet the materials are. You are aiming for a mix which when squeezed in the hand, will feel damp, but not yield running water. Continue building until all the materials have been used. Cover and leave to start decomposing.

When rapid decomposition is taking place, the heap will heat up significantly. This is what we aim for. The heat is caused by millions of beneficial micro-organisms feeding on the compost materials and starting to decompose them. During this process, the heap shrinks rapidly.

As the nitrogen and sugars in the vegetation become used up by the micro-organisms, their reproduction slows down and the heap cools down.

Turning of the heaps

After the initial rapid decomposition period is over, each heap is turned into the next bay toward the centre i.e. 2 or 4. If available, any further green material is incorporated as the heap is turned. The new heaps should heat up and then cool as before.

Lastly turn heaps in 2 & 4 into bay 3. Cover and leave to mature. Worms and other invertebrates will move into the heap to continue the decomposition process by feeding on the compost.