

# Build a Compost Heap in the Garden

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## Make your own Compost

Most kitchen scraps and garden waste is recyclable don't throw it in the bin when it could be used to improve your garden and attract wildlife

A compost heap is an ideal refuge for mammals that come to forage for old fruit, birds will scavenge for insects and hedgehogs feast on slugs and snails, reptiles and amphibians will rest or overwinter in the warmth an open heap generates. A compost heap can also attract lizards, snakes and slow worms.

## As a Wildlife Habitat

- A compost heap will attract a variety of wildlife to a garden.
- A traditional heap of loose material will attract animals that might like to burrow into it, such as hedgehogs and toads or nest beneath it like field mice and voles.
- Invertebrates that will eat their way through the waste to break it down. This in turn attracts birds, especially in the winter months when there's a frost is on the ground and the soil is too hard to forage for worms.
- Rotting vegetation will generate heat... ideal for lizards, slow worms and snakes.
- Hedgehogs are good in a garden; they eat slugs and snails and can use the heap for shelter.
- Rats are unwelcome in a garden; use garden waste with fruit & veg waste – don't throw out meat or fish (raw or cooked); it will attract rodents.
- If your aim is to attract wildlife - avoid chemical activators as these can be poisonous.

## Types of compost heap

- A traditional heap of loose material is ideal for wildlife.
- A dustbin style compost bin is a home for worms and invertebrates that work the compost however not ideal for larger animals that won't have access.



- A boxed compost heap is constructed with planks, posts and chicken wire.



- A compost heap with several compartments is ideal. As one section is filled with scraps, lawn cuttings etc and is left it to rot whilst new fresh waste can build up in another. If there is limited space in the garden, try and provide access to the bottom of the pile, so the old stuff can be used while still adding to the top.
- Virtually anything which once lived can be put on a compost heap. Woody items like shrubs prunings and brussel sprout stalks should be finely chopped first. Evergreen trimmings, pine needles and large woody materials take a long time to rot so should be avoided.
- Nettles, grass cuttings and autumn leaves are good and can act as activators for the heap.
- If your aim is to attract wildlife - avoid chemical activators as these can be poisonous.
- Compost needs to be damp but not saturated to keep it decomposing; siting the heap in sunlight can help stop the heap from becoming slimy.
- A loose heap isn't ascetically pleasing so make it in a corner of the garden out of sight. The fewer disturbances, the more wildlife will visit the heap.
- Screen your messy heap from view with a small hedge.