

...and finally!

These days it's important not only to do your bit for the environment, but also to understand why you're doing it and what it achieves. It has been calculated that the average household's compost bin will divert 178kg of biodegradable municipal waste from your kerbside collection in a year. It might not seem like much, but that's a weight equivalent to 7 bags of coal not going out in black bags.

Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Richard Lochhead, hailed the level of composting in Scotland a success, "We are committed to a Zero Waste Scotland. Home composting is an excellent way of dealing with waste at the point where it arises and turning material into a valuable product for the garden. I am pleased to see the success in this area and the Scottish Government will continue to support work to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and to make valuable use of our natural resources".

A third of Scottish households are now composting at home, according to a recent Waste Aware Scotland survey.

The main reasons people gave for composting at home are that it's good for the garden (59 per cent) and reduces the amount of

waste sent to landfill (41 per cent).

Dr Nicki Souter, Waste Aware Scotland Campaign Manager, said "We are delighted to see that so many people across Scotland have taken up home composting. As well as reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill, composting kitchen and garden waste produces a great soil conditioner for the garden.

"Getting started is easy and there are many things that can be composted throughout autumn, including fruit scraps and vegetable peelings, tea bags, fallen leaves, egg shells and paper items which can include crumpled up cardboard, egg boxes, toilet roll tubes, and unwanted mail."

Contact us with your photos, tips and hints at -

email: waste@shetland.gov.uk

or

Phone: (01595) 744850

Or by post at:

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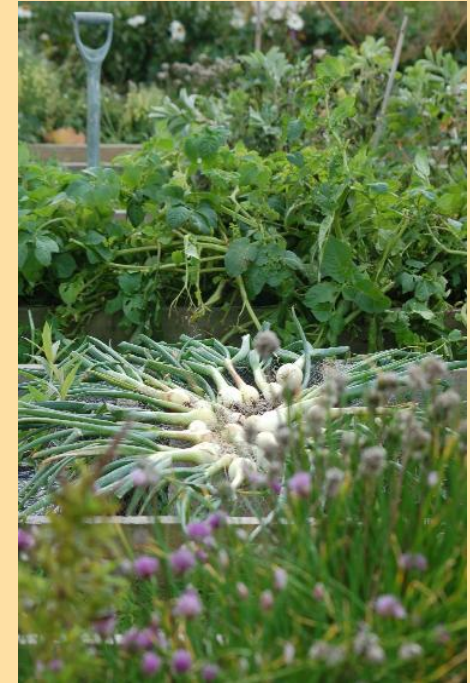
COMPOST

newsletter no.1
Autumn '08

Welcome!

If you've received this newsletter you, or someone at this address, has bought a compost bin from the Council's Environmental Services Department in the last 4 years. We're hoping this newsletter will help you get the best out of your compost bin, and help to create a forum for discussion of any issues arising with composting in Shetland.

We know from meeting you at the various shows and festivals through the year that a great many of you are composting with great success, but we also know that regardless of success, there are still questions and issues that arise. To this end we plan to use this newsletter as an "open forum" for you to share your methods of composting and any photos illustrating your process, the quality of your compost and the flowers and vegetables you produce as a result of your compost use.



In tandem with this paper-based newsletter, we have created a mailing-list/forum on the internet at

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/shetlandcomposters>

which should give faster feedback for any questions. Don't worry, though, if you don't have access to the internet, we'll be featuring the most useful discussions in the newsletter so that nobody misses out.



If you have any questions about your compost please contact the Environmental Management team on (01595) 744850

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Getting the Most out of Your Compost Bin

In order to get the best compost, it is important to put the right amount of **green** and **brown** waste in your compost bin.

But which waste is **green**, and which is **brown**?

Green waste includes vegetable peelings and grass cuttings. These are moist materials needed in the composting process. **Browns** are dry and allow space for air to circulate in the compost bin. **Brown** materials include twigs, scrunched up or shredded paper and cardboard, egg boxes, toilet roll tubes, straw or pet bedding.

If you have too many **greens** in your bin, you will end up with a mixture that is too wet, but too many **browns** in the mix will make it too dry and slow the composting process. Ideally the contents of your compost bin should be half '**green**', half '**brown**'.

Compost Bins from WRAP



You already have one compost bin, if you had two you could make twice as much compost! WRAP (Waste Resources Action Programme) will provide up to three compost bins to every household at reduced prices. There are two ways to purchase another bin:-

- You can order online by visiting www.wasteawareScotland.org.uk
- Or call the orderline on 0845 077 0756 (Calls are charged at UK local rates and lines are open 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday)

Although they're ordered from outwith the Isles, the bins are despatched from a store in Lerwick.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I've heard that there are heavy metals in some inks, does this affect which paper I can compost?

A: There **ARE** heavy metals in some inks, but these are being reduced all the time. It is important to remember that these also occur naturally in soil, in much greater quantities. If it's paper it can be composted.

Q: How long does it take to produce usable compost?

A: This depends on what you're putting into the bin in the first place. If you put in a good mix of materials then you should get a usable product in 12 to 18 months.

Q: What can I do about the flies in my compost bin?

A: These flies are fruit flies. They are harmless and attracted to the fruit peelings in your compost bin. You can discourage them by wrapping your fruit waste in newspaper, or covering fresh material in the bin with a layer of soil or torn up cardboard. But don't worry, they're a good sign.

Q: What will my compost look like when it is ready?

A: Compost will look dark and crumbly when it is ready, and will have a pleasant earthy smell.



A good compost heap should get hot enough to poach an egg, but not so hot to cook a lobster!



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