

## Introduction

Every wildlife friendly garden needs a compost heap. Creating a compost heap in your garden is easy. As well as providing a home for wildlife it will provide free fertiliser for your garden and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill sites.

## This leaflet will...

Enable you to build a wildlife friendly compost heap.

Help you identify some of the wildlife that lives in compost heaps.

## Did you know...?

- Hundreds of species of invertebrates may be found in compost heaps including many types of beetles, spiders, woodlice, worms, millipedes and centipedes.
- Both slow worms and grass snakes may use compost heaps as breeding sites.
- You can make your compost heap container from all sorts of things, even old pallets and straw/hay bales.



# How to build a wildlife friendly compost heap...

- Clear an area.
- Stand a pallet up so its long edge sits on the ground.
- At either end of the pallet, hammer a stake between the two layers of the pallet.
- Place two pallets at right-angles to the first and once again secure with stakes.
- Secure the remaining pallet to the front using wire or string - this will allow you to remove it when you need to turn or empty your compost.



**Woodlouse** - minibeasts are vital to a compost heap.



**Slow worm** - may breed and have their young in the heap.



**Shaggy ink cap** - fungi help breakdown the contents of your compost heap.



**Snail** - will feed on the compost and provide food for many different birds.



**Grass snake** - if you are lucky a female may lay eggs in your heap during June or July.



**Millipede** - they munch their way through the ingredients, turning it into a rich compost.



**Common toad** - will find shelter in the damper parts of the heap.



**Worm** - a healthy compost heap needs worms.



**Hedgehog** - may visit at night to feed on snails and other invertebrates.

## The compost heap's ingredients

Balance is the key to a good compost heap. To make a good mix you need more or less equal amounts of 'greens' and 'browns' plus small amounts from the 'others' list.

### The Greens

#### Nitrogen-rich ingredients

- Comfrey leaves, nettles, young green weeds - avoid weeds with seeds, coffee grounds, grass cuttings, urine - diluted using 20 parts water to 1 part urine, raw vegetable peelings, tea bags and leaves, soft green prunings.

### The Browns

#### Carbon-rich ingredients

- Cardboard - cereal packets and egg boxes, waste paper - even shredded, old bedding plants, newspaper - although it is better to recycle them, hay and straw, wood shavings, fallen leaves.

### Other Compostable Items

- Wood ash - in moderation, hair, crushed egg shells, natural fibres - such as wool or cotton.

# Frequently asked questions

## How often should I turn my compost heap?

Turning a compost heap, aerates it and helps speed up the composting process. You can turn your heap as little or as much as you want, but in general compost heaps that can be left unturned and undisturbed for several months will be better for wildlife.

## How long does it take to make compost?

The composting process can take as little as one month or as long as 24 months.

## What do I do when my compost is ready?

Make sure you retain some of your mix for the next heap as it will have lots of worms and bacteria in it ready to kick start your new heap. Spread the compost on the top of the soil, do not dig it in this way you will create cover for invertebrates and amphibians and create lots of foraging opportunities for birds.



To find out more about Norfolk's wildlife visit **www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections**

Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

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