

OPEN PALLET COMPOST BIN

Composting is a really simple way of recycling the green waste arising in school. It supports a reduction in the waste collected from schools for landfill and it supports better plant growth as a quality fertiliser to condition the school's flowerbeds and planters. Encouraging pupils to partake in a system of composting gives them a valuable lesson in sustainable waste management and it may have a knock-on impact on their behaviour in their own household. The formation of compost also offers valuable lessons around the decomposition process and the life cycles and behaviour of soil organisms.

Definition

An open wooden composter is a well-ventilated container designed to be an eco-friendly way of creating and storing compost.

Procedure

The key features of the wooden composter are the gaps in the wood to aerate the compost, a front door so that the compost can be readily accessed with a shovel and the bin should have no base so that there

is no barrier between the compost and the


surrounding soil thus enabling soil organisms to circulate freely. The composter should be sited on level ground, in partial shade and away from prevailing wind.

The simplest construction is from four wooden pallets, some galvanised wire for fixing them together, six wooden stakes for stability and a hinge to create a door.

Clear and level the ground where the composter will sit. Create three sides of a square with pallets stood on their sides. Strap these side and back panels together using ~50cm lengths of galvanised wire wrapped and twisted tightly at each top and bottom corner. Wooden stakes can be hammered through the pallets at each corner for stability. Attach a hinge to the front edge of the left-hand pallet and connect this to the final pallet which will act as a swinging doorway.

Place branches at the base of the finished composter to serve as a drainage layer that





will allow air access. The base can first be lined with chicken wire to deter vermin. You are now ready to begin filling your bin with garden and kitchen waste!

A key factor is water. If the compost is too dry, the soil organisms in it will not survive. Ideally the compost should feel damp to the touch but not

too wet. Rake the compost at least once a week and regulate the water content. If the compost is too wet then limit the regularity of adding wet waste such as fruit clippings and rake more frequently. It takes about a year for compost to mature to a dark nutrient-rich substrate.

Tips

- The composter can be built from many hardwoods such as oak, acacia, chestnut, plum or cherry. Woods high in resin are ideal such as pine or larch.
- The wood can be treated to lengthen its lifespan with an organic lacquer. Be aware that many wood treatments could release toxins into the food chain.

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