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Build a leaf compost bin



Royal Horticultural Society



growit

Activities

Building the bin

Why?

Making your own compost is an essential part of good gardening practice. As well as having a compost heap for plant waste, autumn leaves can be collected in their own leaf compost bin to make leaf mould. Leaf mould works well as a soil improver, a mulch (soil covering), and can be used in own-made compost mixes for seeding, sowing and potting of plants.

Materials

- 4 Bamboo canes – 1.5m high
- 4 Cane toppers
- Measuring sticks
- 4.3m Plastic netting / windbreak netting
- Thin gardening wire – cut 10 pieces each 8-10cm long



Put the cane toppers on the top of each cane for safety.

Push the first corner cane firmly into the ground.



Using the measuring sticks, form a 1m x 1m square from the first cane and firmly push the other three canes into position.



Unroll the netting and slowly walk around the four canes, so that the two ends meet and the four canes are enclosed.

Fix the netting to the canes, by passing the wire through the net and twisting the two ends together tightly around the cane. Apply at least 2 pieces of wire per cane, spaced at the top and bottom.



On the last cane, the netting should overlap and the wire should feed through both layers. The loose ends of the netting can either be cut off or attached to the other piece of netting with another piece of wire.

This will form an enclosed bin ready for lots of leaves.

Curriculum links

Key Stage 1

Science – SC2 Life processes & living things, SC3 – Materials & their properties.

Design & Technology: Working with tools, equipment, materials to make quality products.

Key Stage 2

Science – SC2 Life processes & living things, SC3 – Materials & their properties.

Design & Technology: Working with tools, equipment, materials to make quality products.

Filling your leaf bin

Equipment

- Leaf rakes
- Buckets
- Gloves
- Plastic bags



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1 Once the leaves start falling, take leaf / grass rakes and buckets and start collecting. Pupils work well in pairs sharing the raking and gathering up. Show how to safely carry (head down and handle by their side) and use the rakes. Use plastic headed leaf rakes for this job rather than the smaller, metal soil rakes.

2 Collect lots of leaves to fill your bin. Water in the layers as you go, as this helps to rot the leaves down. Teachers could also buy and water in a leaf mould accelerator (such as Biotol) as this helps to speed up the decomposing of the leaves. Turning the leaves in your bin every couple of months can also help them decompose quicker. It may take up to a year before the leaf mould is ready to dig in to improve the soil or use as mulch.

It may take up to 2 years before it can be used for seed sowing / potting compost.