

# Community Composting

Composting garden waste and fruit and vegetable scraps from the kitchen is a great way of reducing the amount of waste we throw away. Home composting is now very popular and well established. But what if your garden is too small to provide the necessary mix of soft/green to woody/brown materials needed to create a successful compost heap? What if you would like to do something on a larger scale? An alternative way of composting that can benefit everyone is Community Composting.

## What is Community Composting?

Community Composting is when a group of individuals or an organisation within a community get together to make compost. A communal approach to composting allows expertise to be shared and everyone gets an opportunity to do their bit for the environment.

## Who can become involved in Community Composting?

All sorts of groups can get involved in community composting.

- ✓ Tidy Towns Groups
- ✓ Residents Associations
- ✓ Environmental Groups
- ✓ Local Development Associations
- ✓ Sports Clubs
- ✓ Gardening Clubs
- ✓ Schools

## How to get started?

The first step is to form a group of interested individuals. The



size of your project will be determined by the number of volunteers and the size of the community that will be served by it. It is best to start off on a small scale and build on that, rather than being over ambitious at the start.

## The Site

Selecting a site for your community composter is very important. The site need not be very large, but it must be freely accessible to all participants. In general an area that is owned by the community or an organisation is preferable to a privately owned site.

## Insurance/Planning

Planning Permission and public liability insurance may be required for the proposed composting site and it is advisable to seek advice from your local authority on these issues.



Offaly County Council



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## The Volunteers

A number of people are needed for the management of the composter. The success or failure of the project will depend very much on the enthusiasm and commitment of the participants. The composter needs to be managed properly and not allowed to become a nuisance. If the composter accepts waste from local residents you will need to establish:

- what type of materials are accepted and
- when these materials can be dropped off on site

You will also need to ensure that materials are stored and used properly.

## The Composter

A community composter is just the same as home composter, on a larger scale. Community composters are available commercially but you can make your own. Any container made from wood or wire mesh at least one cubic metre in size is all you need to start. A lid can be made from wood or a piece of old carpet. Containers with two or more sections allow material in one section to compost when full, while fresh material is added to another one. Approximately one third green material to two thirds brown material must be layered in a container. Brown material can be stored on site ready for layering with the fresh green material. Below are just some of the types of household & garden waste that can be composted.

## The Finished Product

When all the hard work is done the resulting compost should be dry and crumbly in texture and will be dark brown in colour. Reasonably large quantities of compost will be produced and can be used in a number of different ways.

- ✓ It can be distributed to the local community
- ✓ It can be used in local environmental projects
- ✓ It can be used in community gardens.



## What you can compost

### GREEN MATERIAL

- ✓ Fruit & vegetables
- ✓ Tea leaves/tea bags
- ✓ Garden waste
- ✓ Leaves
- ✓ Some Weeds
- ✓ Dead plants & flowers
- ✓ Grass & hedge cuttings

### BROWN MATERIAL

- ✓ Kitchen paper
- ✓ Straw
- ✓ Wood, twigs & branches (in small pieces)
- ✓ Crushed egg shells
- ✓ Cardboard egg boxes



## The Benefits

- ✓ The individual saves money on waste disposal charges.
- ✓ Waste is diverted from landfill, the demand for peat products is lessened, which helps to conserve Ireland's internationally valuable peatland habitat.
- ✓ Involving the community in the management of their own waste helps create awareness of best practice waste management.
- ✓ Adopting a communal approach helps foster community spirit.
- ✓ Composting is a cheap and green way of converting waste into

clean-smelling and useful garden material.

Grants may be available from your local authority for the installation of a composter. For more information on community composting, contact your Local Authority's Environmental Awareness Officer.



**Reduces waste**



**Great for gardens**



**Eco friendly**



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This information was supplied by the Midlands Region Local Authorities, Laois County Council, Longford County Council, North Tipperary County Council, Offaly County Council & Westmeath County Council,