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## COMPOSTING

**Making compost** is a great way to recycle kitchen and garden waste and improve the quality of your soil. With the changing of the season, don't let all those leaves go to waste, either use as mulch directly on your garden beds or add them to your compost.

A compost bin or heap is a valuable asset in any garden. When added to your garden, compost will improve the soils ability to hold water during dry spells, while at the same time allowing it to drain freely during rainy periods. It is also an excellent method of increasing the overall depth of top soil, a good source of nutrients for healthy plant growth and mulch for weed control.

There are several ways to construct a compost heap. However there are two important things to remember – one is adequate oxygen and the other is sufficient moisture to enable the organic matter to be broken down by good bacteria.

You can either purchase a compost bin and we have several different ones at the nursery including tumbling bins. Or make one, if you are making a compost heap/bin at home any simple construction with a minimum of three sides is sufficient to contain the heap during the composting process. With a typical bin the addition of one or more

lengths of slotted pipe inserted into the bin to increase the aeration of the compost will speed up the process and should prevent it from becoming a smelly mess.

A homemade compost bin should be around one metre wide with sides no higher than a metre. It can be from sheets of iron held in place by strong stakes, or you may prefer to use wire mesh, timber or bricks. A few pallets will make a good bin. You could even use bales of straw, and as the straw rots it is added to the compost.

The successful decomposition of organic waste material down into compost depends on the action of bacteria. This bacteria relies on adequate moisture and oxygen.

The addition of a small quantity of blood and bone or animal manure, between every 15 to 20cm of organic waste will speed up the process. If you turn the heap every 2 to 3 weeks, adding water when necessary your waste will compost much quicker.

All organic matter can be used in the compost, including vegetable scraps, weeds (excluding couch grass and other perennial weeds) leaves; newspaper and lawn clippings (add lawn clippings in thin layers).

Never add anything with thorns as you can be sure they will stab you when it comes time to use the compost.

Woody material such as twigs and branches are fine to add and if you cut them into smaller pieces they will break down quicker.

When adding to the compost, add your ingredient's in layers of brown and green. Brown being things like dry leaves, straw of any sort, newspaper, pet hair, waste from the vacuum. Greens are things like lawn clippings, spent flowers, kitchen scraps.

When adding any of these, the smaller the pieces are, the quicker they break down into compost.

For things like straw and garden clippings, lay them out on the ground and run the lawn mower over them as an easy way to break them up.

COMPOSTING BIN ALTERNATIVES

