

Create a school compost heap

Creating a school compost heap is a fantastic way to give your plants the best environment in which to grow as plants need regular feeding in order to thrive. You can buy in fertilisers but if you are trying to cut costs and keep within a specified school budget why not create your own in five easy to follow steps? Building a school compost heap will not only be the cheaper option but it's a great way to support school recycling and to make pupils aware of the importance of sustainability.

You will need:

3 wooden pallets or similar (such as an old door), string, spade, fork and chicken wire (optional).

How to build your compost heap

- 1 Choose the compost location. Be mindful of children's play areas and other health and safety aspects
- 2 Lay out the size of your heap using string. Dig a 10 – 13cm trench around three edges of the string. Turn over the soil inside the trench to encourage the worms to make their way into the compost
- 3 Slot each of the pallets into the trenches, making sure they are secure in the ground. The pallet used at the back should be slightly higher than the two side pallets and the front of the heap should be left open
- 4 Chicken wire can be used to cover the holes in the pallets to ensure that all waste is kept within the compost area. If using chicken wire, staple it into place and make sure there are no sharp edges
- 5 Create a lid for your compost bin from anything you have handy, even a piece of old carpet. A lid helps to keep in compost heat

Compost winners and losers

Not all scraps and waste makes for good compost:

Winners	Losers
Household waste such as used tea bags and egg-shells	Cooked kitchen waste
Shredded newspaper (not magazines)	Meat or fish
Soft hedge prunings	Diseased plants
Uncooked vegetable cuttings	Dairy products
Dead plants and leaves	Any plants / weed that still contain seeds

How to care for your heap

To get the best out of your compost heap you should treat it with a little love and attention:

- 1 Aim for a good mixture of brown and green plant waste in your heap. Brown waste is made up of things like stems, trimmings or bark. Green waste is things like flowers, leaves and grass cuttings.
- 2 Do not overwhelm your heap with large amounts of one particular waste as this can upset the natural balance.
- 3 Sprinkle a little fresh soil on to your heap every month to get more micro-organisms into the compost.
- 4 Air is an essential part of the composting process. Heaps should be turned every few months to get more air into the mix.

