

Do-it-yourself compost bin

Why compost?

Food waste accounts for nearly a third of household waste but it can easily be turned into a useful resource – nutrient-rich compost for your garden! Food waste rotting in landfill also generates gas (known as carbon dioxide equivalent or CO₂e) which contributes to climate change. Each one of the compost bins in this guide saves 275 kg of food waste from landfill when full. If every backcourt in Govanhill composted their food waste, this would save 140 tonnes of CO₂e a year—the same amount produced by 40 flights from Scotland to Australia! It's easy and cheap to build your own compost bin for your shared backcourt and this guide shows you how.



A finished compost bin

Before you start

You will need....

- 4 wooden pallets (ideally 1200 x 800mm)
- 13 boards of wood (19mm x 150mm x 1.6m)
- 3 batons (25mm x 50mm x 4.8m)
- Treated plywood (1500 x 1000 x 9mm)
- Chicken wire (5 metre roll)
- Staple gun and staples
- Wire cutters
- Saw
- Power screwdriver
- Hammer
- Screws (4, 1 ¼ and ½ inch)
- 6 outdoor rust-proof hinges
- Measuring tape, pencil and work gloves

Step 1—Pallet Assembly

Position your four pallets on a flat surface (ideally where the bin will get maximum heat from the sun) and as flush with each other as possible, as in the picture below. Make sure the two side pallets overhang a bit at the front where the door will eventually go. If you can't get pallets which are all the same size you can cut bigger pallets down to line up with the smaller ones.



How to lay out the pallets for your bin

Step 2—Lining

Next, line the inside of the bin with chicken wire. This acts as a deterrent to pests such as rats and foxes. Staple the chicken wire to the pallets, ensuring that the pallets are completely covered and overlap the wire so there are no gaps. Use tin snips to trim the wire to size. Remember to wear gloves to protect your hands when handling the wire.

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Step 3—Front door

We've designed the bins so that the whole front opens out. This makes it easier to turn the compost or to access it when it's ready to use. Measure the distance at the front between the two side pallets and cut six of the wood boards to this size. Screw one of boards along the front of the base pallet for the front door to attach to. Screw the other five boards to the three batons with two at each side and one in the middle; you may have to stagger the top board on to the lower one if it's sitting too high. Screw the hinges evenly spaced along the board that is attached to the base pallet, then put the door in position and screw the hinges on to the door.



Stapling the lining to the inside of the bin

Step 4—Top boards

Measure and cut four more boards and screw them to the tops of the side and rear pallets to create a flat, even surface for the lid to sit on.



Top boards and bay divider running down the middle

Step 5—Bay divider

We divide the inside of the bin into two separate bays, so that waste in one bay has time to break-down into compost while the other is being filled with fresh waste. Place two boards the height of the bin inside in the middle at the front and back. These are to support a third board which is screwed on top to fit the depth of the compost bin from front to back. Staple a piece of chicken wire between the supporting boards to separate the two bays.

Step 6—Lid

Use the 9mm sheet of plywood for the lid. Screw the 3 hinges to the lid evenly spaced, with ½ inch screws then screw the hinges on to the back of the bin at the top. The lid will stop pests getting inside the bin and keep in heat and moisture which is needed for the composting process.



First bay filling up after four months

View our How to build a compost bin film at: <http://southseeds.org/time-to-start-composting/>

168 Butterbiggin Road, Govanhill, Glasgow, G42 7AL

info@southseeds.org

0141 636 3959

www.southseeds.org

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