

Get Composting! A Free Workshop in Thurles Library

A free composting and wildlife gardening workshop will take place in Thurles Library, The Source on Tuesday 11th November at 6.30 p.m. The workshop, which is being organised by North Tipperary County Council, will be presented by Nuala Madigan from the Irish Peatland Conservation Council. If you are interested in attending the workshop simply turn up on the night and you could win a free composting bin!

In conjunction with National Science Week, North Tipperary County Council is encouraging households to Get Composting in order to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. So why is composting so wonderful? For a start, it improves the nutrient levels in the soil. It also improves the soil structure, preventing erosion and retains the soils water holding capacity. All of these benefits contribute to better root development and a healthy flourishing garden. The other great benefit is that making your own compost reduces your household waste.

Aine Mc Carthy, Environmental Awareness Officer with North Tipperary County Council who is organising the workshop suggests that “Whether you’re an established composter or you’re just starting out, you’ll be glad to hear you’re part of a large, growing number of gardeners who have recognised the benefits of home composting. As the winter time is approaching, it’s a great time to purchase a compost bin where all your organic waste can be placed and turned into compost for the following year.”

Here are 5 simple steps to get composting:

Step One: Placing Your Bin

It’s best to site your bin on a level, well-drained spot. This allows excess water to drain out and makes it easier for helpful creatures such as worms to get in and get working on breaking down the contents. Placing your bin in a partially sunny spot can help speed up the composting process.

Step Two: Put These In

Like any recipe, your compost relies on the right ingredients to make it work. Good things you can compost include vegetable peelings, fruit waste, teabags; plant pruning’s and grass cuttings. These are considered “greens.” Greens are quick to rot and they provide important nitrogen and moisture. Other things you can compost include cardboard egg boxes, scrunched up paper and fallen leaves. These are considered “browns” and are slower to rot. They provide fibre and carbon and also allow important air pockets to form in the mixture. Rashed eggshells can be included to add useful minerals.

Step Three: Leave These Out

Certain things should never be placed in your bin. No cooked vegetables, no meat, no dairy products, no diseased plants and definitely no dog or cat litter, or baby’s nappies. Putting these in your bin can encourage unwanted pests and can also create odour. Also avoid composting perennial weeds (such as dandelions and thistle) or weeds with seed heads. Remember that plastics, glass and metals are not suitable for composting and should be recycled separately.

Step Four: Making Good Compost

The key to good compost lies in getting the mix right. You need to keep your Greens and Browns properly balanced. If your compost is too wet, add more Browns. If it's too dry, add some Greens. Making sure there is enough air in the mixture is also important. Adding scrunched up bits of cardboard is a simple way to create air pockets that will help keep your compost healthy. Air can also be added by mixing the contents. After approximately 6-9 months your finished compost will be ready.

Step Five: Using Your Compost

Finished compost is a dark brown, almost black soil-like layer that you'll find at the bottom of your bin. It has a spongy texture and is rich in nutrients. Some bins have a small hatch at the bottom that you can remove to get at the finished product. But sometimes it's even easier to lift the bin or to tip it over to get at your compost. Spreading the finished compost into your flowerbeds greatly improves soil quality by helping it retain moisture and suppressing weeds. Composting is the easiest way to make your garden grow more beautiful. Good finished compost can take up to six months to a year to make, but the process can be accelerated by regularly turning and mixing your compost bin.

Potting Plants

A good guideline for using your compost when potting plants is to mix 1 part sand with 2 parts sterilized soil or loam, and 2 parts finished compost. This formula will give you the best results.

For more information on the workshop please contact Ann Marie Brophy, Executive Librarian, Thurles Library by phone: 0504 29720 or email: ambrophy@tipperarylibraries.ie