



Become a member of The National Allotment Society

Membership of The National Allotment Society comes with a raft of benefits, from discounts on horticultural products through to initial legal advice and horticultural expertise. To become a member visit **www.nsalg.org.uk** or call **01536 266576**.

Pesticide disposal

There are strict Government laws and guidelines from the Health and Safety Directorate for the safe disposal of old or unwanted chemicals. You must follow them and act in accordance with their instructions. Any sprayers and containers of concentrated, mixed or old chemicals must not be emptied down a drain, toilet, sink or poured directly on to the soil. This is to prevent the possible contamination of ditches, drains and watercourses.

Contact your local council to arrange for the collection of any unwanted chemicals that you want to get rid of, as part of its hazardous waste collection service.

If you have any empty containers to dispose of (eg. after you have used up all of the pesticide), then the empty outer cardboard packaging can be put into the recycling bin. Plastic containers must be rinsed out three times before they are re-cycled. The water used to wash out the sprayer/container must be sprayed over an area of ground similar to the site which you originally bought the product to treat (do not pour the water down the sink, toilet or drain).

Do not dispose of any chemical containers by burning them on a bonfire.

For more information visit: www.pesticides.gov.uk/guidance/industries/pesticides/topics/using-pesticides/disposing-of-pesticide-waste

General waste disposal

For all other items of waste, these should be added to your council refuse collection or taken directly to the local authority tip/recycling centre. Call your local council to find out what waste collection services they offer.



The National
Allotment Society

National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd



Compost, bonfires and waste disposal



On the allotment there will always come the time when you need to dispose of old plants, leaves and general rubbish. Many allotment sites will encourage composting and some may allow bonfires, but please see inside, for our guidance on what to do with your waste.

Home composting

This should be your first choice for all green plant waste. Compost production works best when there are a couple of heaps on the go at the same time; the first is this season's new heap beginning to rot down, and a second one containing last year's waste material which should be ready to be used. Make the individual heaps about 1yd/ metre square by a 1yd/metre high.



A compost heap needs a balance of carbon, nitrogen water and air to produce the black, friable organic material that can be dug back into the soil. To create good compost you should mix the carbon-based waste half and half by volume with the nitrogen-based plant remains. The woodier material helps to provide structure, creating an air flow through the heap whilst the soft green material provides the moisture. All of the materials will compost more effectively if they are cut up or shredded before thoroughly mixing them together. It is always best to stack the different types of material to one side before making the compost heap. Try to build in

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one operation, thoroughly mixing the different materials together as it is created. Avoid allowing any one material to dominate the heap. If this isn't possible then add the waste in layers to avoid them clumping together. Turn the compost heap at least once a year by throwing all of the partially broken organic material out of the container and the throwing it back in – this will help speed up the composting process. Cover your heap to keep the moisture and heat in, but don't let it dry out too much; water it occasionally in long dry spells. However if your compost does become very wet and smelly, add more woody materials to it as it helps to increase the air flow and dry the heap out.

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Carbon: shredded newspaper, torn up cardboard (not too heavily printed), sawdust, wood chips, old wool remnants (not carpet, as the chemicals can leech out), vegetable/flower leaves and waste root vegetables, straw.

Nitrogen: grass cuttings, soft prunings, old plants and flowers, uncooked vegetable peelings, coffee grounds, tea bags.

Neutral: egg shells.

Do not add: cooked or raw meat, bones, fish, bread, human or pet faeces, glass, plastic, metal, printer paper (it is likely to have been coated so will not break down), coal ash, infected and diseased live plants or perennial weeds (this can be added to council green waste schemes, see opposite).

Turn your compost heap at least once a year, to help the materials to breakdown. Once you have created good compost, dig it into your soil to help improve its structure and nutrients. The compost can be used as a mulch to stop weeds and help keep the soil moist during dry spells.

Council recycling/green waste scheme

If you would rather send your green waste away to be recycled then many councils run such a service. However please check with your local authority to ensure your site is covered. If this service is on offer, then it is safe to include any diseased plant matter into these bins, as the extremely high temperature these units produce, will kill off the diseased material.

Bonfires

Bonfires can be a real nuisance so many landlords are now banning them from allotment sites. Always check your tenancy agreement before setting alight to anything, and be aware of the local by-laws that cover public nuisances (including smoke). Call your council's environment office for guidance when planning the safe and appropriate disposal of any rubbish.

If you do have permission to hold a bonfire and your fellow plot holders and immediate neighbours do not mind, we recommend the following procedure:

- Always observe the simple courtesy of letting your neighbours know when you intend to light the fire.

- Always check the stack intended for burning to look for hibernating hedgehogs and other animals that may be in it. Start the bonfire at a safe distance away from the stack.
- Smoke hangs in the air on damp days and in the evening; so try and avoid lighting a fire under such conditions.
- Avoid burning on windy days as the prevailing wind direction may blow smoke or sparks directly into neighbouring properties.
- Only burn dry material and NEVER burn household rubbish or anything containing plastic, foam or paint. Do not take rubbish to the site to burn.
- Never under any circumstances use an accelerator (e.g. petrol) to get the bonfire started.
- Never leave the bonfire unattended always wait until everything has burned down before leaving the site. Never use water to douse a bonfire; it may appear as if the fire has been safely put out but the water only serves to superheat the ashes and they could re-ignite some hours later. When you have to leave the bonfire site always throw soil or sand over it to smother the heat source.

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