

Grange Lane - Composting Demonstration Notes 13/10/2019

On the plot (for demo only)

(1) Locations.

- a. Upper bin – double bay (temporary) includes
 - pile freshly constructed
 - remnants of a pile assembled in summer
 - *pitchfork* tucked down the back
- b. Lower bin – two double bays (permanent), includes
 - Older pile (left hand bay)
 - Second bay used for brambles which will be burnt rather than composted
 - *Thermometer* which is sitting on the top of the pallet on the far left

Lessons

(2) Hot Composting

You need a large amount of material (1 cubic metre) – see new pile. This is both much faster and, when done correctly, will kill any seeds and pathogens.

What happens:

- First phase, bacterial activity gives off heat. With a large pile, this heat escapes less easily, so the heat builds up. Well managed, temperatures can reach 65C or 165F within a few days.
- Temperature will plateau and eventually decline
- Decomposition will continue but other higher organisms will take an increasing role
- When the temperature reaches about 30C, you will have created a perfect environment for worms, which should (hopefully -see below) multiply
- Can't be piled up gradually

Building the pile

- Choice of material

Material	Delivery	Comment
Royal stable manure	Delivered loose intermittently	Very fresh, lower in urine and manure (N), higher in straw (C)
Local stable manure	Delivered in black bags occasionally. Can be collected,	Mixed ages. Higher N, Lower C
“Black gold”	Loose, very occasional	Largely composted but often contains a lot of sticks. Can be composted very fast but needs to be sifted.
Coffee husks	Bagged. Weekly	Additive. Good N. Prone to clumping
Coffee grounds	Bagged. Weekly	Additive. Very good N.

- Make sure all material is mixed and wetted. “Like a damp sponge”. Should be able to squeeze a few drops out of any handful
- Cover with tarpaulin

Managing the pile

Turning with pitchfork to ensure all material has time at centre of pile.

- Initially, every other day
- After temperature drops to 50C, once a week

Monitor temperature to ensure it doesn't go over 65C, as this will kill beneficial organisms. If it does, turn and add some water.

Key equipment

- Compost thermometer – essential
- Pitchfork – makes turning much easier than with normal fork

See links on website.