

Reusing and Recycling Garden Cuttings

Composting your garden cuttings allows the recapture and reuse of valuable nutrients and organic matter. Keeping garden cuttings out of landfill also prevents the production and release of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

What are garden cuttings?

Garden cuttings include leaves, grass clippings, branches, hay, flowers, sawdust, woodchips and bark.

Why compost garden cuttings?

When garden cuttings and other organic material (like food) are sent to landfill, they decompose without oxygen (anaerobically) to produce methane; a greenhouse gas with more than 20 times the global warming capacity of carbon dioxide.

When garden cuttings are composted, the organic matter and nutrients they contain can be reused as fertiliser. The use of compost in gardening, landscaping, horticulture and in agriculture can:

- reduce the amount of water required
- reduce the amount of synthetic fertilisers needed
- improve the structure, fertility and health of soils
- help repair soils suffering from poor management

Properly composted garden cuttings are a valuable resource. In some commercial composters, methane and other biogases can also be captured and used to generate electricity.

Recycling Options

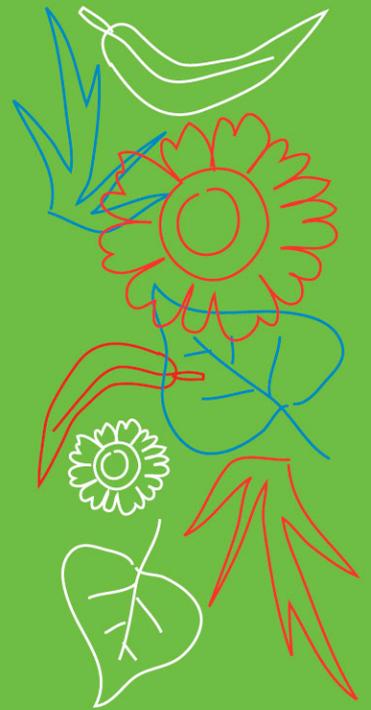
For households: Garden cuttings can be composted in your own compost bin or compost heap. Some local councils and community gardens run composting and worm farming workshops to help you get started.



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Factsheet



How do you recycle computers, corks, cartridges and cans?

For information on council services and drop-off locations in your area... visit



RecyclingNearYou
.com.au

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or call



RECYCLING HOTLINE
1300 733 712

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Many metropolitan councils in Australia provide a kerbside collection service for garden cuttings, on a regular or on-call basis. The garden cuttings are usually composted at a commercial facility and converted into soil conditioners, fertilisers, compost or mulch. Check the services available in your local area at RecyclingNearYou.com.au.

For businesses: Commercial recyclers can provide businesses with a collection and recycling service for garden cuttings. To find a commercial service near you, visit BusinessRecycling.com.au.

What Happens When Garden Cuttings Are Composted?

Composting is the biological breakdown of organic matter (such as garden cuttings or food scraps) into humus or compost; a material containing stable yet readily-available nutrients. Microorganisms (such as bacteria and fungi) and microfauna (such as insects and worms) break down the organic material in the presence of oxygen.

By controlling composting conditions such as the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio, temperature, moisture and oxygen levels, we can influence the composting process. Compost is an excellent soil conditioner that improves soil fertility and encourages plant growth. Good composting practices also reduce of the amount of methane produced.

A worm farm is a particular type of composting system where worms play the largest role in the decomposition process. Generally speaking, household worm farms are too small to deal with many garden cuttings. They are great for food scraps.

Commercial composters may use a variety of specialised anaerobic composting systems to speed up the rate of decomposition and to capture any methane and other biogases produced in the process. These gases can then be captured and used to generate electricity.

More Information

Compost for Soils (compostforsoils.com.au)
Planet Ark's videos on composting and worm farming – available online soon!

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