

# BUILD YOUR OWN COMPOSTER

**Many compost bins can easily be constructed out of recycled materials. Here are some practical tips on how to go about it and a few examples of the most common bin types, which we have mostly borrowed from RRFB Nova Scotia's website.**

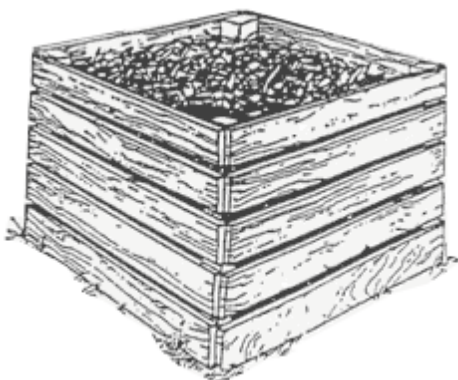


Building your own composter makes it easier to fit it into your garden or backyard. You can make it any size and shape you like, and use any materials you have at hand.

## Practical tips

When building or making a compost bin from DIY materials, you always need to remember that you are trying to balance the conflicting needs of retaining heat and moisture with ensuring air circulation. With this in mind you should first look at where your compost bin will be sited. If it is in a particularly sunny or dark spot then you will need to bear in mind moisture/heat loss i.e. have less/more air vents. If you site your bin in a spot that gets both sun and shade then you can focus more on achieving good air circulation. Whatever DIY bin you choose, remember to always cover the heap. You can do this very simply by using an old bit of carpet or tarpaulin.

Do try not to buy materials for your DIY bin. It is always better to use recycled materials and it should be possible to use things that you have to hand. For example, only make a compost bin out of cement blocks if you or a neighbour has them left-over from a building project. York Rotters are always interested in any unusual DIY bins so please let us know if you have made one out of something interesting.

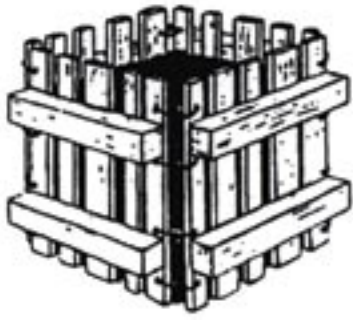


## Wooden unit

Choose a 3'x3' square site for your compost bin. Use a sledgehammer to pound four posts (2x4) into the ground three feet apart, at the corners of the square. Nail 1x6 wood to the posts, leaving two inches between boards. One side can be left open to allow for an easy access if you wish.

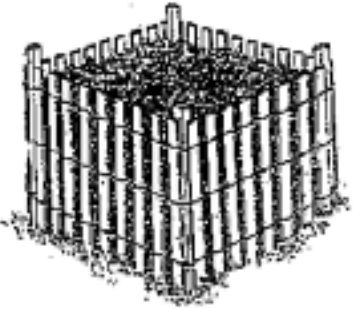


**Need more advice? Contact York Rotters on 01904 412861 or [rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk)**  
We give free composting advice, training and talks to gardening clubs and schools.



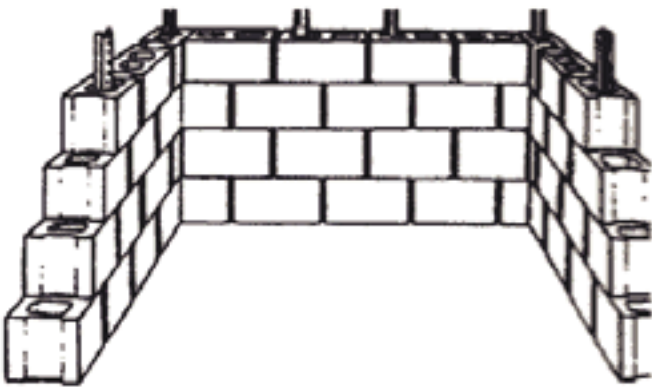
## Pallet bin

One easy way to build a simple and effective compost bin is to use four wooden shipping pallets and tie them together. After placing the four pallets upright to form your square bin, tie the four corners with rope, wire or chain. You can use a fifth one as a floor inside your bin to increase airflow and stability.



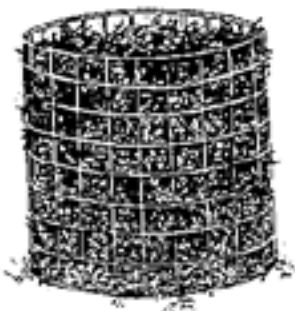
## Fence bin

Wood or metal fencing (or chicken wire) can be used to make a composter that is cheap and very easy to set up. If you want to turn the pile, you can remove the fence, set it up beside the pile, and turn the compost into the newly set up bin. Simply make a circle out of the fence and tie it with metal wire to a couple of posts.



## Cement block bin

Recycled cement blocks or bricks may be used to build a simple two-bay composter. This design can be as big and modular as you like. If you make it very large though, it may be difficult to find a cover for it.



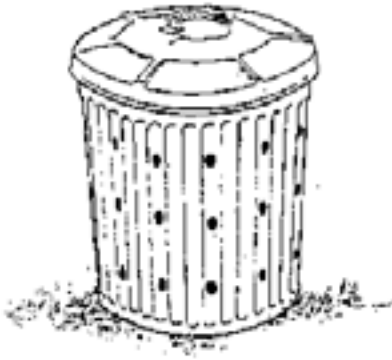
## Wire-mesh unit

Tie 3-4 ft of wire mesh into a circle and attach the ends with wire ties using pliers. Space wood or metal posts around the inside, hold tight against the wire and pound them firmly into the ground to provide support.



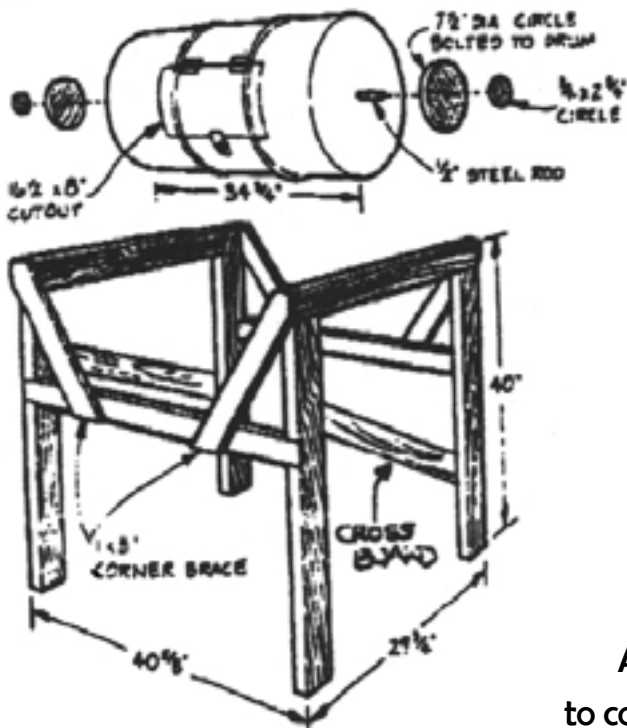
## Tyre bin

Tyre bins are easy self-build bin made with a stack of tyres. Simply stuff the inside of the tyres with old newspapers or cardboard. They keep compost tidy and work well in small gardens keeping the heap warm. The volume may be too small though and it can be tricky to remove the finished compost. Also they can be toppled over by children or large dogs.



## Drum

A plastic or metal drum may be used as a composter. It requires very little space in your backyard and is cheap and easy to set up. Remove the bottom of the drum and puncture holes throughout. You may want to raise it off the ground for additional ventilation.

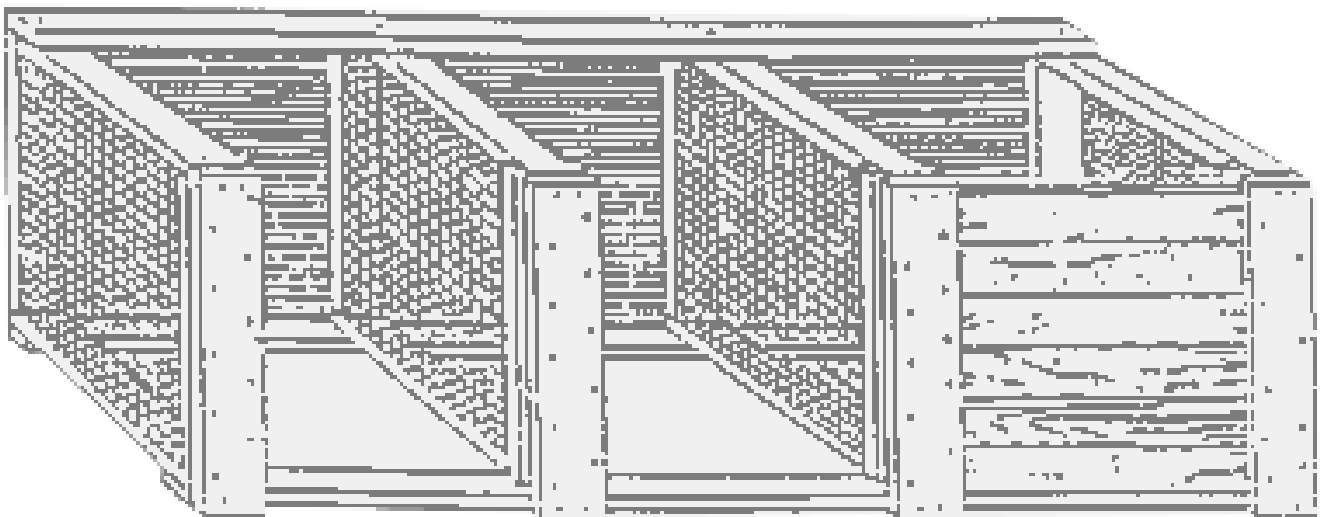


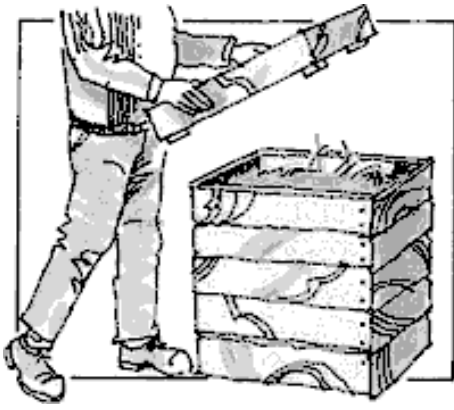
## Rotating barrel composter

If your composting operation is small and you neither relish nor have the time for turning materials, then you'll find this composter suited to your needs. The barrel is rotated several times whenever new materials are added. It is constructed with a minimum of hand-powered tools and is not difficult or time-consuming to build.

## Wood-and-wire three-bin unit

A wood-and-wire three-bin turning unit can be used to compost large amounts of yard, garden and kitchen wastes in a short time. Although relatively expensive to build, it is sturdy, attractive and should last a long time. Construction requires basic carpentry skills and tools. With optional lids and bottom, this unit can be made rodent-resistant.

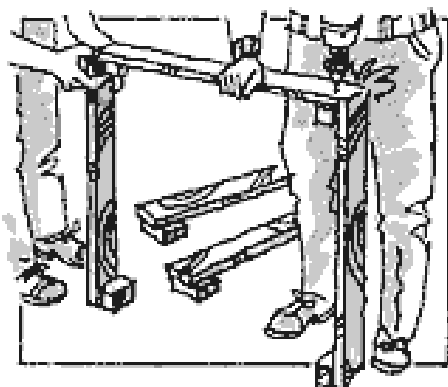
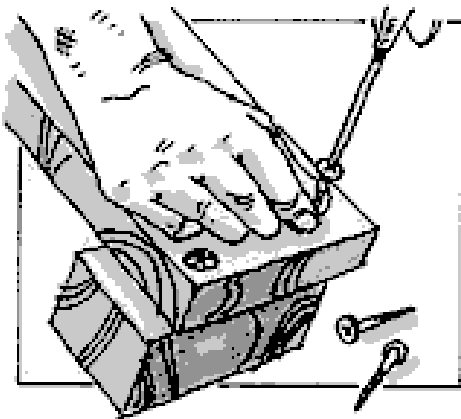




### Materials and equipment for ten sections:

- 30m of 7.5cm\* x 1.5cm timber
- 2.2m of 5x5cm timber
- 220 of 3.6cm screws, size number 8
- screwdriver, drill, and saw

\* wider or narrower boards may be used, as long as the size of the corner blocks is adjusted too.



## Building a compost box

(adapted from [www.organicgardening.org.uk](http://www.organicgardening.org.uk), with kind permission from Henry Doubleday Research Association)

The following instructions describe how to make a moveable, wooden compost box consisting of identical interlocking sections which are stacked one on top of the other. As the compost decreases in volume, the top sections of the box can be taken off and used to start building up a new container. Make a few extra sections and you will have a very flexible composting system.

The instructions given here will make a square compost box 75x75x75cm. We would not recommend a box much smaller than this.

1. Cut two boards, each 75cm long.
2. Cut two boards, each 72cm long.
3. Cut four lengths of 5.5cm from the 5cmx5cm timber. These will make the corner blocks.
4. Take one of the two shorter boards and place it in position on two of the corner blocks. The ends of the board should be flush with the blocks; the blocks should be offset so that they project 2cm beyond the edge of the board (see picture on the left). Fasten with 3 screws on each end.
5. Do the same with the second shorter (72cm) board.
6. Stand the two shorter boards (with blocks attached) on their ends, with the protruding ends of the blocks away from you. Place a 75cm board on top of these vertical boards to form the third side of the section. Ensure that the ends of the longer board are flush with the outer edges of the vertical boards.
7. Drill and screw each end of the 75cm board. Use two screws only this time.