

Composting FAQs

How does the scheme work?

The Food Partnership trains two local volunteer compost monitors to keep an eye on the bins and give inductions to new members.

It is a closed scheme, open only to people from the local community who have signed up and received some basic training in composting. After their induction from the compost monitors, members receive the code for the padlock and a free kitchen caddy to enable them to use the bins.

The scheme starts with two boxes; once the first box is full, we lock it and let it do its magic and start filling the second. When this is full, we add a third (occasionally we add a fourth box, depending on the scheme, though this is unusual). By the time the third bin is full, the first one is usually ready to be used and emptied.

Monitors keep an eye on the boxes and report any issues to the Food Partnership.

Will it smell?

Compost is essentially broken-down food waste so there is the potential for unpleasant odours but in a well-managed scheme, with a good balance of wet and dry contents that are turned regularly, smells are kept to a minimum and are rarely an issue when the lids are closed.

Will it attract vermin & flies?

Tiny fruit flies are common in compost bins in the summer, especially if you are adding a lot of fruit and vegetable peelings. This can increase during the hotter months but can be managed by adding dry materials (cardboard) to the boxes which should be done by monitors and scheme members. The fruit flies are rarely noticeable until the lid is opened. Turning the compost so fruit and vegetables are buried will also help.

Many people ask about rats. Rats are attracted to cooked food. For this reason we only accept raw fruit and vegetable waste, tea bags and coffee grounds in the bins. No cooked food, meat, fish or dairy is to be put in. In addition, we have improved our bin design, adding wire mesh inside the boxes and minimising hidey holes for nesting.

What happens to the compost once it's made and how long does it take?

The average box takes about 9-12 months to produce compost. Members are encouraged to take some of the compost or share it with other scheme members.

If there is spare compost we work with many community gardens that are happy to take it. You can spread it on the earth and lightly mix it in before you start growing vegetables or where you want to plant new flowers. Plants already in the garden will also appreciate having some compost in the spring, particularly if the soil isn't very good. For members without gardens, house plants love a top-up of fresh compost every now and then too.

Why don't the council collect food waste on Brighton?

The council says: "We do not currently collect food waste directly from households due to the different specialist collection methods needed. Around 1/3 of housing in the city are flats, and we would not be able to run a food waste collection service from them due to the communal nature of their collections. When designing a sustainable cost-efficient service we need to take into account participation rates, types of property, cost and value for money, to ensure the service is suitable for the city. Our projects team continue to explore options and funding.

Instead we offer subsidised compost bins to all residents to encourage composting at home, including kitchen caddies which allows residents to make use of their own compost and is better for the environment. [Visit our composting page](#) for advice on the best option for you and details of discounted composters, food waste digesters and wormeries. Otherwise food waste for the time being needs to be disposed of in general refuse".