

Garden waste minimisation



As spring warms up and the garden comes alive, unfortunately so do the weeds. Garden waste makes up over 20% of the waste taken to the household waste and recycling centres. We have sold over 50,000 compost bins and have a garden waste collection service right across Cornwall. All of this waste is composted, but the very best thing is to try to reduce the amount of garden waste that you have to deal with.

Grass cutting – Leave it on the lawn

Most people remove grass cuttings, either with a lawn mower box or raking it up. If you leave the clippings on the lawn, after a couple of days it will dry out and be absorbed into the lawn or the worms will take it down into the soil. This has positive benefits for the grass because your lawn will retain the nutrients in the grass. In time, you will have a thicker, lush lawn which will reduce the need for special feeding. Also consider a slower growing variety of grass that will not need to be cut so often. If you have a lot of grass consider investing in a mulching mower which chops the grass very finely.

Converting an area of grass into a wild flower meadow is also great for bees and beneficial insects and it only needs to be cut once or twice a year.

Weeds

Mulching - This just means spreading a layer of material over the top of any bare soil to stop weeds growing. All sorts of material, including specialised membranes, gravel, bark chips, stone chippings, compost, chopped straw, recycled glass and even coco shells can act as a barrier to weeds. Mulching also means that any weeds that do come through are easier to identify and to pull up.

Get them young - If weeds are removed when they are young seedlings they can just be left to dry out and disappear on the top of the soil. This also prevents them from going to seed and spreading more weeds.

Ground cover plants - If you cover the soil with plants they will exclude light from the potential weeds and prevent them growing, this will also reduce soil erosion and reduce water loss through evaporation.

Pruning

Most shrubs and bushes can be pruned when the branches are young or just take out the growing tip. With some, like Laurel, the growing tip at the base of the leaf can be simply rubbed out. Others, like Privet, need constant attention to keep them in order.

Right plant in the right place

It is important to think carefully about the plants that are placed into the garden. To avoid lots of maintenance and also cut down on waste, choose slow growing varieties that need minimum pruning and will not outgrow the space. Some dwarf conifers, succulents and alpine plants give an impressive show, but will stay small and compact. The local garden centre will be able to offer advice on the best plants to choose.

Wildlife love mess!

Try not to be in too great a hurry to tidy everything up. To encourage wildlife into the garden keep an area for them to rest and hide. Make a woodpile of bigger branches or logs covered with smaller pruning with spaces for hedgehogs, frogs and toads to live and hide. They will repay you by eating garden pests. Old bamboo tied up in a bundle will encourage ladybirds and bees to set up home and a patch of nettles will bring in the butterflies. Also consider planting native species that will provide birds and insects with food and shelter.

Conventional composting

It is estimated that at least 30% of domestic waste could be composted in a standard compost bin. The current compost bin offer has a 'buy one get one half price' offer with bins starting from £15. Go to www.getcomposting.com for more details. We also have information on building your own compost bin, and have a guide to starting a good composting system at home, including a fact sheet on the website.