

Leaf Mould- The Easiest Way to Make Compost!

Autumn is the perfect time to collect leaves for composting or for use around your home.

The leaves can be used in the following four ways:

- As a mulch in your garden or around bushes in perennial planting areas to keep weeds down and retain moisture in the soil during drier summer months
- As a way to balance composting ingredients in the spring and summer when there are so many green materials such as grass cuttings
- As a critical bedding material for a wormery
- Composted on their own, leaves can be placed in bins or cages to produce a lovely weed-free leaf mould compost in 1-2 years time.



← Yes:
Shady location
Proper sized bin and cage

No: →
Cage too small
Brambles invading



Steps to Set Up Your Leaf Mould System

Here are the steps for setting up your leaf mould system:

1. Pick a shady location near the trees that drop autumn leaves.
2. Be sure to keep your leaf mould cages or bins away from ivy, bind weed or brambles/briars so that these weeds do not invade and contaminate the leaf mould.
3. If the pile, pallet bin or cage is placed under a tree, place several layers of cardboard or a woven weed barrier underneath to prevent tree roots from growing up into the leaf mould pile.
4. Build a large enough bin or pile so it can more easily retain moisture needed so sustain the leaf moulding process. Piles can be covered with black plastic to retain moisture in drier summer months. Pallet bins are large enough to make good leaf mould. Cages should be a minimum diameter of 1.5m and can be as large as 3m in size.

Making Leaf Mould & Managing Your Leaf Mould System



Here are the steps for starting and managing your leaf mould system:

1. Once the bin is in place, fill it with **wet** leaves. The easiest way to do this is to rake up leaves that are already wet on the ground so you don't have to mix and water them prior to adding to the pile, bin or cage.
2. The leaves from early fall will settle in your bin within a few weeks. Simply top up the bin or cage at the end of the autumn season. Do not overfill the bin or cage as the top layer can dry out and the dry leaves can then be blown away during windy winter weather.
3. Keep the piles, bin or cage open to the environment so that rainfall can keep materials moist.
4. In drier summer months, check the piles for moisture. Mix and water the top layer as necessary.
5. Over time, the contents of your bin or cage will settle. Do not add leaves from the following season to your older leaf mould piles. Start new piles or cages for the next season's leaves. This makes harvesting the leaf mould easier the following year.
6. Some leaf mould can be ready to use after one year as a mulch.
7. After two years, your leaf mould compost should be finished and resemble a dark and crumbly compost. You'll find finished leaf mould in the middle of the pile often under a dry layer of leaves on top (see photo to the right).
8. You can screen your leaf mould and return undecomposed leaves to a new or existing leaf mould bin or cage.
9. Use the leaf mould in the same way you would use compost: as a mulch, a soil amendment, as an ingredient in a potting mix, etc. See the Using Compost fact sheet.

