

Making Leaf Mould



Recycling fallen autumn leaves is the easiest way to make free compost. It might not sound particularly inspiring, but leaf mould is a really useful soil improver or mulch, and can even be used as seed-sowing compost if left for long enough. And it's very easy to make.

To make leaf mould, gather up leaves by raking them up or collect them with the mower from the lawn if the grass is still growing, as grass trimmings will make the leaves break down faster.

Now you have your leaves, you can stash them in ready made composting sacks or simple black bin liners with a few holes punched in the side and bottom. When almost full, sprinkle with water, shake and tie, before storing in a shady spot.

Alternatively, you could make a frame from chicken wire or similar, supported with stakes or bamboo canes. Locate it in a sheltered part of the garden to ensure that leaves do not blow away. Make your leaf heap as large as possible to hasten decay, and moisten it periodically if it becomes dry.

By the following autumn, the leaves should have rotted down into a rich, crumbly, humus rich mixture, that can be used as a mulch around the base of plants, autumn top-dressing for lawns or winter covering for bare soil. When rotted for two years or more, leaf mould makes good seed compost or, when mixed with sharp sand, potting compost.