

The myth that peat is necessary for a healthy garden has led to our native peat bogs being decimated.

Peat bogs

These soggy places help reduce flood risk, have a part to play in cleaning our drinking water, and store massive amounts of carbon. Yet despite peat's environmental importance, peat use is on the rise in gardening and we're still digging up this precious resource for use in compost mixes. Pearl-bordered fritillary and large heath butterflies depend on these unique habitats.

Peat facts

- Peat grows by only 1mm a year.
- Commercial extraction can remove 500 years worth of growth in a single year.
- Amateur gardeners account for 69% of peat compost sold in the UK.

Peat-free compost

If you have the space, create a compost heap. They can be fantastic for wildlife and cheaper than buying compost in. If you have to buy compost, there are many alternatives to peat — composts containing mixtures of organic material, such as composted bark, coir (coconut fibre), wood fibre and green compost are mixed with inorganic materials such as grit, sharp sand, rock wool and perlite.

How to make your own compost heap

1. Pick the perfect spot, it is best to site a compost heap on a level, well-drained area. This will ensure that any excess water drains away easily. This also helps worms to get in and get on with the job of breaking down the content.
2. Nature has provided us with the perfect waste disposal unit in the humble worm. They can live their whole lives in the dark and love the moist atmosphere of a compost heap, eating the waste material you put in and converting it into compost.
3. Good things to compost include vegetable peelings, fruit waste, teabags, plant prunings and grass cuttings. These are fast to break down and provide important nitrogen, as well as moisture. It's also good to include things such as cardboard egg boxes, crunched up paper and fallen leaves. These are slower to rot but provide vital fibre and carbon and also allow important air pockets to form.

If you don't fancy building a compost heap, you can buy a compost bin. They are compact, so perfect for smaller gardens and yards.



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