

Master Composter Conference 2008



Speed Dating: sharing ideas about being a Master Composter

Master Composters

My achievements as a Master Composter have been:

- to achieve a good supply of compost
- meeting people
- making a compost game
- face to face exposure
- negligible
- talking to gardening club
- graduating
- 25% increase in bin sales
- scrounged some woodchip
- participated in a lecture
- to set up compost bins for 5 of my friends
- displays at charity events
- learning about compost myself
- converting people to compost waste
- raising awareness
- getting children involved
- graduation at end of 1st year
- meeting people
- graduating at end of 1st year
- learnt how to make proper compost
- meeting like minded people
- meeting people

Most popular: meeting people and graduating

As a result of being a Master Composter, I have learnt...

- What to put in the compost bin
- I didn't know as much as I thought!
- Discovered more things I can put in a compost bin
- A lot about vegetable gardening
- Don't need to turn the compost heap
- That it just happens (with a bit of help!)
- Of the many problems
- Composting generally
- How passionate I am and how many people can be converted
- The importance of composting
- How passionate people are about composting
- There is a lot more to it than meets the eye
- To ask questions
- To talk to neighbours

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- The art of composting
- There is a huge amount of knowledge out there
- People are disinterested in town centres
- How to make proper compost
- Worm composting – bought a wormery
- To ask people questions rather than tell them
- I don't know it all!
- Do not need to turn heap
- How to make compost
- Surprised by how many people compost

I manage my own compost by:

- Getting the right mix
- Aerating
- Getting the right mix
- Turning it
- Having a Kitchen caddy
- Leaving it alone
- Having 2 homemade compost buckets in the kitchen
- Mixing a lot
- Having a kitchen caddy which I empty in to a dalek in the garden
- Turning
- Chucking kitchen and garden waste in and hopefully keeping a good mix
- Having a range of heaps, bins and leaf piles
- Having a wormery and a compost bin
- Using kitchen waste
- Having several bins
- Having a compost bin, a food waste digester (Green Jowanna)
- Having patience and putting in a good mix
- Not turning it
- Having 4 bins on my allotment and one at home

The Jury is out on which is better – turning or leaving alone, but several people commented on the importance of having the right mix

A way to reach the 'hard to reach' public could be to:

- Local pub
- On the school run
- Go out and accost them!
- Outside school gates
- Something nice to eat grown in your own compost, eg strawberries
- Places unconnected with composting
- Keep it simple and keep the costs down
- Use the children as a tool
- More PR or compulsion
- Local radio
- Legalise it!

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- Using sure start to recruit 'compost champions' from different cultural backgrounds
- A winning smile
- Appeal to people's greed – getting something for free
- Around the world composting workshop – different nationalities asked how they compost so they become composting champions
- Going to local food events
- Approachable
- Offering incentives
- Going to events unrelated to gardening and composting
- Car boot sales
- Going to unusual events
- Dog walking and talking
- Provide a chair to sit and chat

Lots of ideas here for attending a wider diversity of events/locations.

My least successful Master Composter activity was:

- 2 day steam rally – location problem
- Everyone was a composter
- Talking to the converted at events
- Preaching to the converted at a horticultural show
- Outside a tube station
- Wet day – no cover!
- No one turned up to the event
- Town centre
- No one had a garden
- No one to tell anything
- Attending an event that was badly advertised so there were very few public present
- Poor location at good event
- Own gardening club members
- At an echo event – composting was last
- Contacting the coordinator!

Message: Need to think about location of stand at events and to consider if it is likely you will be talking to people already composting at events.

I enjoy being a Master Composter because:

- Meet people
- Positive feedback
- I'm into recycling
- I enjoy recycling
- It gives a sense of achievement
- Flexibility at work
- Spreading the word to the public
- Free entry at events
- Spreading my enthusiasm
- The transformation effect

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- Learning about soil
- Getting hands dirty
- Speaking knowledgeably
- Meeting people
- Increasing gardening knowledge
- Expanding knowledge for clients
- It's a bad habit!

I love composting because:

- It reminds me of the cycle of life and death
- Its something for nothing
- Its therapeutic
- It reduces waste to landfill
- Its good for the garden
- Social intercourse
- Fewer weeds
- Like the transformation
- Helps the garden grow
- Being out in the fresh air and with nature
- Satisfying process
- Doing my bit to save the planet
- It just happens!
- I hate waste and you get something for free
- Have a big garden
- It helps me to meet people
- Outdoor activity
- Sharing information and enthusing people
- I like getting my hands dirty

We all love composting for lots of different reasons!

If there is one thing I would change about being a Master Composter it would be...

- Less statistics
- More time to do MC activities
- Have more time to spread message
- Don't know!
- To be able to make more time to spread the message
- Sliding scale for volunteer hours
- Standing
- Nothing
- More funding from the LA/Government
- Nothing
- Would like to give up work and do as a full time job!
- Weather!
- Nothing
- If I had more time I would be more proactive
- Raised status

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- Hasn't got a good profile
- Don't need change

Overwhelming message was that not much change is needed except perhaps more time for it and more government funding.

My most original Master Composter activity was...

- Display at Macmillan Cancer Research
- Local food day in my area
- Displays at charity events
- Own composting competition
- Mobile compost trailer
- Cotswold wildlife park – composting unusual animal manures
- In a classic car show
- Compost section at local garden open day
- Made a game suitable for disabled people
- As part of an environmental campaign
- Taking a group around a large-scale worm farm
- Energy saving conference – only compost person present
- School compost bin design competition
- Village fetes and plant sales
- Own Dalek

Lots of ideas here for exciting activities – I would love to visit a large scale worm farm!

I would like to receive more training on:

- Different composting systems
- Area specific items eg green cone
- How to reach different groups
- Applications in the garden
- How to talk to people
- Practical help with different composting systems
- How the microorganisms function
- Presenting to groups
- How the process works (some people are!)
- Rats
- Wormeries
- Rhubarb leaves
- Biology of composting
- Public speaking
- Wormeries
- Recruiting more volunteers
- Technical aspects
- How to reach a wider range of people
- Rats

Lots of requests for training on both technical aspects of composting and the compost process but also on promoting composting, for example public speaking.

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My best experience as a Master Composter this year was...

- School workshop
- Spoken to 3 sets of neighbours
- Infant class
- Meeting smashing people
- Acquiring a free supply of woodchip
- The whole experience!
- Meeting a lot of people
- Visiting a worm-farm
- In class for Ofsted
- Helping a lady apply compost to her flowerbeds
- Talks to groups
- Design competition for schools
- Coming to this event
- Coming to Ryton
- Being asked to set up a compost bin display
- Primary school children and 'awe of wonder' at worms

The number of compost bins/heaps I have is:

- 4 bins
- 3
- 6 bins, 1 leaf mould container
- 2 bins, 1 leaf mould container
- 4 bins, 2 wormeries
- 4 bins
- 4 bins, 1 leaf mould container
- 4 New Zealand boxes
- 1
- 2
- 5
- 4 including 1 builders bag
- 3
- 1 traditional dalek!
- 2 heaps, 5 bins, 2 hot beds
- 3 dalek bins
- 2 dalek bins
- 8
- 1

This variation in number just goes to show that number of compost bins/heaps is no real measure of enthusiasm !

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Coordinators

My achievements as a Master Composter Coordinator have been

- 18 Master Composters attending conference - good social event
- training over 50 volunteers - together they've dedicated over 1700 hours
- to run my own composting course
- set up Oxfordshire Master Composter scheme
- recruitment of a great team of volunteers

Most popular: having a large number of great volunteers

As a result of being a Master Composter, I have learnt...

- How to manage volunteers

I enjoy being a Master Composter Coordinator because:

- I meet fabulous people and it is amazing how much they care.

My best experience as a Master Composter Coordinator this year was...

- Excellent response to recruitment adverts
- Taking a group around a recycling facility