

## How to make your own leaf mould

Most leaves can be turned into leaf mould, but some take longer to compost than others. Oak, alder and hornbeam will soon rot down, while sycamore, beech, horse chestnut and sweet chestnut take a little longer. Leaves from conifers and evergreen plants will take between two and three years to compost and are best added in small quantities only, shredding them first to help speed up composting. All leaves will rot more quickly if shredded – try collecting them with your lawnmower!

If you only have a small garden, you can save them in bin liners, but if you have the space - and a lot of leaves to collect - try building a leaf bin. It's a simple cage-like structure that shouldn't take any longer than 30 minutes to put together.

### Saving leaves in bags

- Take a black bin liner and punch a few holes in the side and bottom.
- Rake up leaves weekly and stash in the bag.
- When almost full, sprinkle with water, shake and tie.
- Store in a shady spot and the following autumn the leaves will have rotted down into a rich, crumbly mixture that can be used as a mulch around the base of plants.
- Let the leaves rot down for another year if you want to use as soil conditioner.

### Making a leaf bin

Here's how to make a bin 60cm square by 90cm high - if you change the dimensions, make sure you can still reach easily into the bin to remove the leaf mould.

#### You will need:

- 1 roll galvanised chicken netting: 3m x 0.9m (10ft x 3ft)
- 4 tree stakes: 1.2m x 40mm (4ft x 1.5in)
- 20 galvanised staples
- Mallet
- Hammer
- Wire cutters
- Heavy gloves



Hammer the tree stakes into the ground, 60cm apart, to make a square frame. Keep as upright as possible and leave 90cm of stake above ground. Unroll chicken wire and attach to first stake with five galvanised staples. Pull tightly to the next stake, attach with staples again and repeat on all sides. Wearing gloves, snip off any excess wire with clippers and bend in any sharp edges.