

Where's Ya Bin - Sustainable Shoppers Guide to Compost Bins



Ahhhh, the good old days. Where milk was hand delivered in glass bottles, kids could play in the street until the lights came on, lawns and gardens were watered by sprinklers (remember them??) and composting meant a smelly pile of rubbish behind the back shed. Now, while I lament the loss of most of these childhood activities, I have to admit I don't miss the stinking compost heap. Don't get me wrong, I love compost, but I also love the technology that has seen these often inefficient heaps transformed into mean, green, compost making machines.

Problem is, there are so many compost bins on the market at the moment that it can be totally overwhelming. Plus, there are a whole host of things to consider when you look at buying a compost bin, including budget, space, amount of greenwaste produced, pets, vermin and the amount of time and effort needed to produce magic compost. So, to help you along, here is a swag of information on a number of commonly used, currently available compost bins, and their features, be they good, bad and ugly. Bear in mind that new products are released all the time, so, if the bin you are interested in ain't on the list, just let us know, or pop on the forum and have a yarn!

Buyers Guide to Bins

Product Name: RELN Compost Bin

Size/Capacity: 225 litres

What's it made of: 100% Recycled Plastic

What's the deal: Straight forward open base compost bin. Has a hinge and lid at the top for whacking in your waste. Basic black. You need at least two bins, one for decomposing material, and the other for using now. SGA recommend three bins, one empty, to be used when turning the compost.

Why we like it: They are cheap and cheerful, readily available, easy to assemble, and manufactured from recycled materials. It's also an also Aussie product so low offset miles!

Why we don't: They are hard work, and, if not turned frequently, things can go pear shaped. Open base can attract vermin and curious pets.

Work required: Medium to high. Heaps require aeration and turning. Clever composters can pop a piece of perforated agi pipe through the centre of the heap to improve aeration.

When will I see compost: Six to eight weeks and beyond (dependant on weather, location, and how often you aerate the heap... the more the better)

Product Name: Gedye Compost Bin

Size/Capacity: 200 litres or 356 litres

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What's it made of: The green ones are high density virgin plastic, but the black ones are 100% recycled plastic.

What's the deal: Very stable open base compost bin. Has a large opening, covered by a well secured lid. Basic (recycled) black or naughty non-recycled plastic green. You need at least two bins, one for decomposing material, and the other for using now. SGA recommend three bins, one empty, to be used when turning the compost.

Why we like it: Has greater stability than some other open base bins. Shorter wider profile can make access easier. Fairly cost effective, and has a six year warranty. Go the Australian made product!

Why we don't: They are hard work, and, if not turned frequently, things can go pear shaped. Open base can attract vermin and curious pets. Having to buy a few of them does add up! Make sure you choose the recycled option.

Work required: Medium to high. Heaps require aeration and turning. Clever composters can pop a piece of perforated agi pipe through the centre of the heap to improve aeration.

When will I see compost: Twelve to fourteen weeks and beyond (dependant on weather, location, and how often you aerate the heap... the more the better)

Product Name: Tumbleweed Compost Maker

Size/Capacity: 220 litres

What's it made of: High density UV treated plastic bin mounted on galvanized steel tubes.

What's the deal: A free-standing, above ground compost bin, fully enclosed and mounted on an A-frame. The bin is able to be "tumbled" over, which aerates the heap without you having to dig it. The ends are vented to allow air to be drawn in, assisting the composting process.



Why we like it: Fully enclosed system means no vermin and pongy pooches, which is definitely a good thing. The "tumbling not digging" concept is on the money as well, and for a fairly complex looking bin, it's dead easy to construct. Five year warranty makes us smile! Australian made. Fairly quick composting process.

Why we don't: Not always the easiest things to turn, especially if the bin is full and you are less than buff. Needs to be flipped a few times a day (ideally). Can't be lodged up against the fence or behind the shed, as it needs a bit of clearance to flip it. The manufacturing process and materials used are not all that sustainable (why not used recycled plastic?!?), but the longish life span offsets this a bit.

Work required: Low to medium. A few quick tumbles every day should do the job nicely!

When will I see compost: Four to six weeks (dependant on weather, location, and how often you tumble the heap.....the more the better)

Product Name: Aerobin 400

Size/Capacity: 400 litres

What's it made of: High density UV stabilized plastic.

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What's the deal: Fully enclosed, free standing compost bin. Incredibly stable, with large square base. This bin has an aeration core, which essentially draws air into the unit, meaning the aeration happens without you having to lift a finger. Aerobin has a leachate tank and tap at the base, meaning any liquid compost can be caught and utilized. The lid is hinged, and two sides can be removed at the base to access the compost. While the product has been designed and developed in Australia, the Aerobin 400 is currently manufactured in India.

Why we like it: This is composting made simple! All the hard work is done, and you reap the rewards. The temperature remains fairly constant inside, so once the heap gets started, composting happens in a flash. Aerobin is capable of breaking down products not generally recommended for use in other bins. Fully enclosed, so is vermin and pet proof. Leachate collection tank is a top concept. The bin is a fairly decent size, great for larger households and properties.

Why we don't: For a start, it's big... too big for a lot of situations. It's not the simplest thing to put together, so instructions need to be followed very carefully. You may have to take out a second mortgage to purchase one, and the three year warranty doesn't seem quite long enough for the cost. The tap for the leachate tank can be incredibly difficult to access, and clever composters may want to extend the tube a touch with some 13mm poly pipe, or raise the bin on some bricks or similar to make leachate collection simpler. Recycled plastic would be a bit more sustainable. It has a fairly significant carbon footprint, due to the product being manufactured in India!

Work required: Low. Once you have managed to put the unit together, there is minimal input required.

When will I see compost: Twelve weeks initially, and then the supply should be fairly continuous for the rest of time (providing you still feed your greenwaste into the bin!).

Product Name: Eco Bokashi Bucket

Size/Capacity: 20 litres (although a larger 120 outdoor bin is also available)

What's it made of: The glossy black bin is 100% recycled plastic.

What's the deal: Fully enclosed "bucket" system, designed to sit inside the house, preferably under the kitchen sink or similar. Works on a fermentation process, whereby your greenwaste is broken down, forming an incredibly nutrient rich leachate, and a pile of non-smelly waste which can be buried straight into the garden. Fermentation grains are needed to facilitate the process.

Why we like it: Fully enclosed system means no vermin or flies. If all things go well, the fermentation process means the bin shouldn't smell at all. Small size makes it tops for apartments and single/couple households. Australian manufactured is always good. The leachate is magic (just don't forget to dilute it before applying it to plants, it is pretty strong). The whole process is fairly quick. Fermented waste is excellent when preparing vegetable gardens.

Why we don't: Well, size ain't everything, but this bin can be a bit small for some situations. Burying the fermented waste in the backyard can prove an issue, especially in apartment or townhouse type situations. You need to use fermentation grains as part of the process and they can be a little expensive and challenging to track down. It can go a bit mouldy if you do not follow the instructions exactly! If you don't bury the fermented waste deeply enough, your dog may suspect you've buried his dinner and try to retrieve it!

Work required: Low to medium. Burying the waste may not be everyone's idea of a good time!

When will I see compost: Once the bin is full, it takes a week for the waste to ferment... that's fast!

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