

Problem	Causes	Remedy
Too dry, fails to compost	Too many browns	Add more greens & water, soak browns before adding
	Compost bin too open, drying out	Use plastic lining or covering to conserve moisture
Too wet, fails to compost	Too many greens in one go	Add more browns & try to mix in
	Insufficient airspaces	Add more browns paying attention to creating airspaces, consider turning the whole heap
	Insufficient drainage	The bin should stand on soil or a bark chip base, ensure a raft of twigs & woody material at the bottom of the heap
Smells	Too wet – see above	Adding rock dust or small amounts of wood ash at intervals can help
Doesn't heat up	Insufficient aeration	Ensure air spaces are being made, consider turning the heap
	Insufficient insulation	Improve insulation by use of black plastic sheet lining, cardboard and ensure the heap is not too open in construction
	Not enough compostable material	Add more! 2 smaller bins are often better than 1 large one
Flies around the heap	Fruit flies	Attracted by fruit & other kitchen waste, normal, harmless and part of the composting process, however if they are a nuisance ensure kitchen scraps are covered by grass, brown material, soil or buried – even wrapped in a sheet of newspaper – deeper in the pile. Don't use insecticides.
	Bluebottles	A few are normal & harmless, however a plague indicates that meat, fish or faeces has been added. Any maggots will eventually hatch & disperse. If you have to, cover with dry soil
	Fungus Gnats	Are a normal around compost & generally harmless, however they can be a problem if home-made compost is used for indoor plants. Biological controls are available.
Slugs in the heap	Composting!	Slugs are part of the composting process. They will be attracted to the heap by cleared crops & kitchen scraps. At least while in the heap you know where they are and that they are occupied – not with your prize lettuce! Don't use slug pellets in the heap.
Ants	Dry heap	Ants, unless red stinging types are harmless in a compost heap and their tunnelling helps aeration. However they do not like damp conditions or disturbance so water the heap/ nest well and consider turning the heap
Wasps	Dry heap	More of a problem with wooden bins, than plastic. A wasp nest in a compost bin is never a good idea – you're very likely to get stung... Watch out for queens from early May onwards, looking for a suitable

		nest site. The beginning of a nest, about the size of an orange can probably be safely removed. Any larger, get the council or contractor
Rats	Dry heap	Rats may be attracted to the snug, dry warmth of an undisturbed heap, so ensure the heap is kept moist throughout & turned regularly. Consider wire mesh across the base & any other entry points.
	Cooked food scraps, meat & fish	These items will certainly attract rats and mice. Don't add them to your heap
Diseased plant material	<i>Most plant diseases are killed in the heat of an active hot heap and the microbial action of even a cool heap</i>	
	Potato blight	Since this disease requires live potato material to live on it is safe to add to an active hot heap where the heat will kill spores. Freezing also kills spores. If in doubt include in municipal green waste collection.
	Onion white rot	Do not add to your compost heap. Can be included in municipal green waste collections
	Club root	Do not add to your compost heap. Can be included in municipal green waste collections
Weeds	Pernicious weeds such as bind-weed, horsetail, dock, couch grass	Best not to add directly to your heap as there is a strong chance they will regrow, even from small pieces. Best to drown or black-sack-stew them for a couple of months until rotten, then add to the heap. Try to include as little soil as possible in drowning bins or black sacks. Can be included in municipal green waste collections
	Seeding weeds	Most weed seeds are destroyed in compost heaps, especially hot ones. However it is better to pull weeds to add to the compost heap before they seed. Weedy compost is better buried rather than used on the surface
Poisonous Plants		Most plant poisons are destroyed & deactivated in the compost process. However, woody material such as yew, laurel & privet takes a long time to break down & maybe best added to municipal green waste collections