

Wednesday, 25th July 2012

Five a Day Market Garden, The Street, Englefield, RG7 5EL

Project: To build a composting area

Outline of Day

10:00	Tea/coffee Introduction Health and Safety, and Tools Talk Task overview
10:30	Commence task
12:30	Lunch
13:00	Resume task
14:30	Tea/coffee and cake
15:00	Complete task!
16:00	Farewell

Location

The Street, Englefield is off the A340 between Tidmarsh and Theale. The Market Garden is opposite Englefield Garden Centre. [\[Map\]](#)

Directions can be found on the Market Garden's website: www.fiveaday.org.uk.

Cars may be parked at the roadside in front of the Market Garden.



What to bring

Please wear clothing and footwear suitable for outdoor work and depending on the forecast for the day (currently sunny 29°C), bring waterproofs and/or sun protection. We will provide gloves and tools. We will also provide tea, coffee and water. Cold drinks can be purchased from the Garden Centre or the nearby Stores.

Be warned: The area in which we are working is partly covered with stinging nettles.

The Task

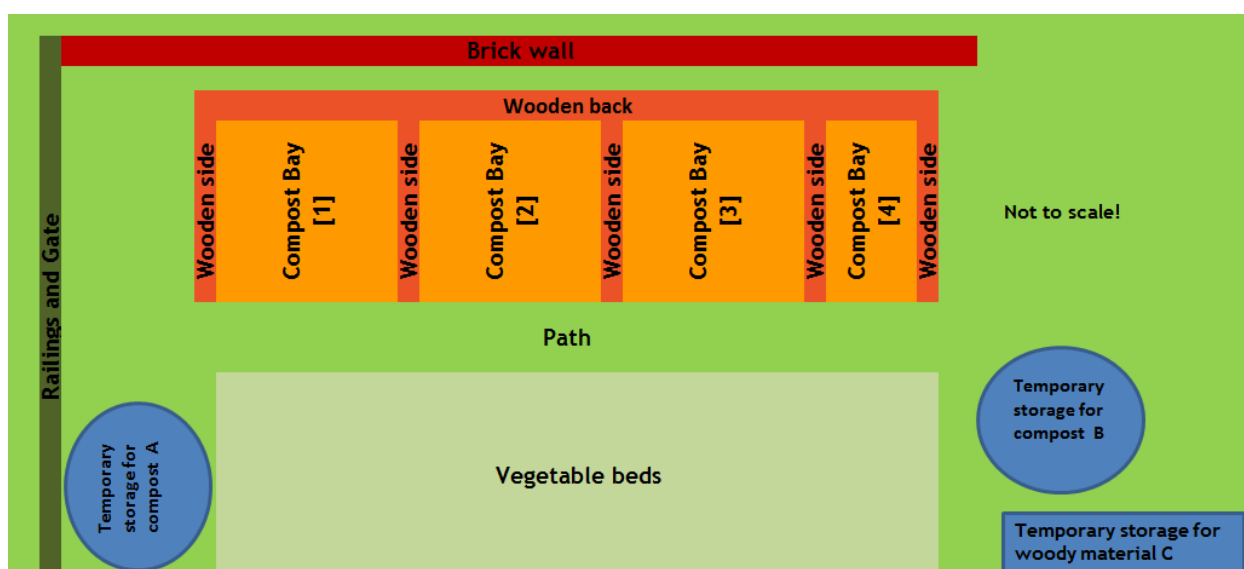
The composting area currently consists of a large heap of material which is constantly being added to but which is not managed or utilised for the benefit to the Market Garden.

The task is to create four bays, three of which will hold compost and the fourth woody material for chipping or burning. The compost will be managed as follows:

- New material for composting will always be placed in Bay 1.
- Bay 2 will contain material from the previous year, Bay 3 the year before that.
- At the end of the year material in Bay 3 should be completely composted and ready for use, so the bay can be emptied.
- The contents of Bay 2 will then be moved to Bay 3, and those of Bay 1 to Bay 2. Bay 1 will now be empty ready to receive new material in the coming year. Moving the material improves aeration helping the composting process, it also mixes the material as that on the outside is likely to be drier and cooler than that at the centre and therefore will be composting more slowly.

All bays will be of the same depth. Bays 1, 2 and 3 will be of the same width while Bay 4 will be half that width. Bays 1 and 2 will be 6 feet in height, the others 4 feet (Bay 3 is small because it will contain material that has been composted the longest and therefore the volume will be reduced).

It is not anticipated that all four bays will be completed. If at the end of the day the first two bays are finished it will have been an excellent day's work.



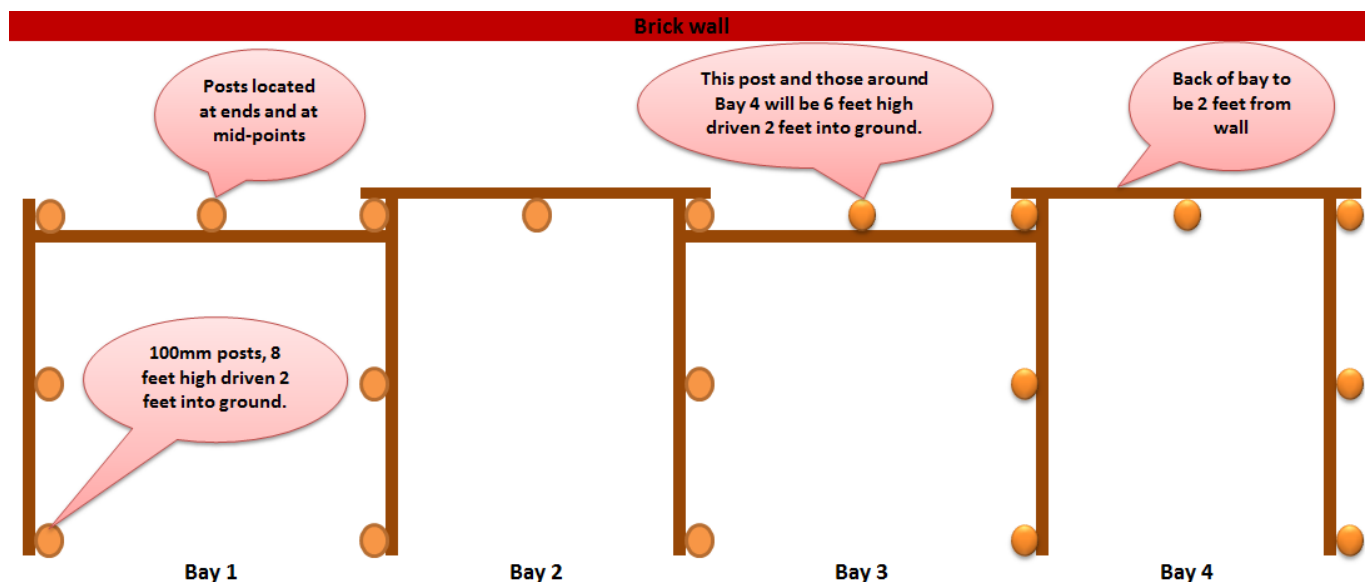
Unfortunately the existing heap occupies the site where the new composting area is to be located, this must be cleared before construction can commence. The task should therefore proceed as follows:

- Start clearing compost from the area where Bay 1 is to be located.
 - Material that has been added recently should be moved to Temporary Storage Area A.
 - Material that is already well composted should be moved to Temporary Storage Area B.
 - Any wood or woody material should be moved to Temporary Storage Area C.
- Once Bay 1 is clear construction of the sides and back can commence, at the same time clearing of the area for Bay 2 can proceed.
- When Bay 1 is complete, material from Temporary Storage A can be moved into the bay.
- Similarly once Bay 2 is complete, material from Temporary Storage B can be moved into the bay.

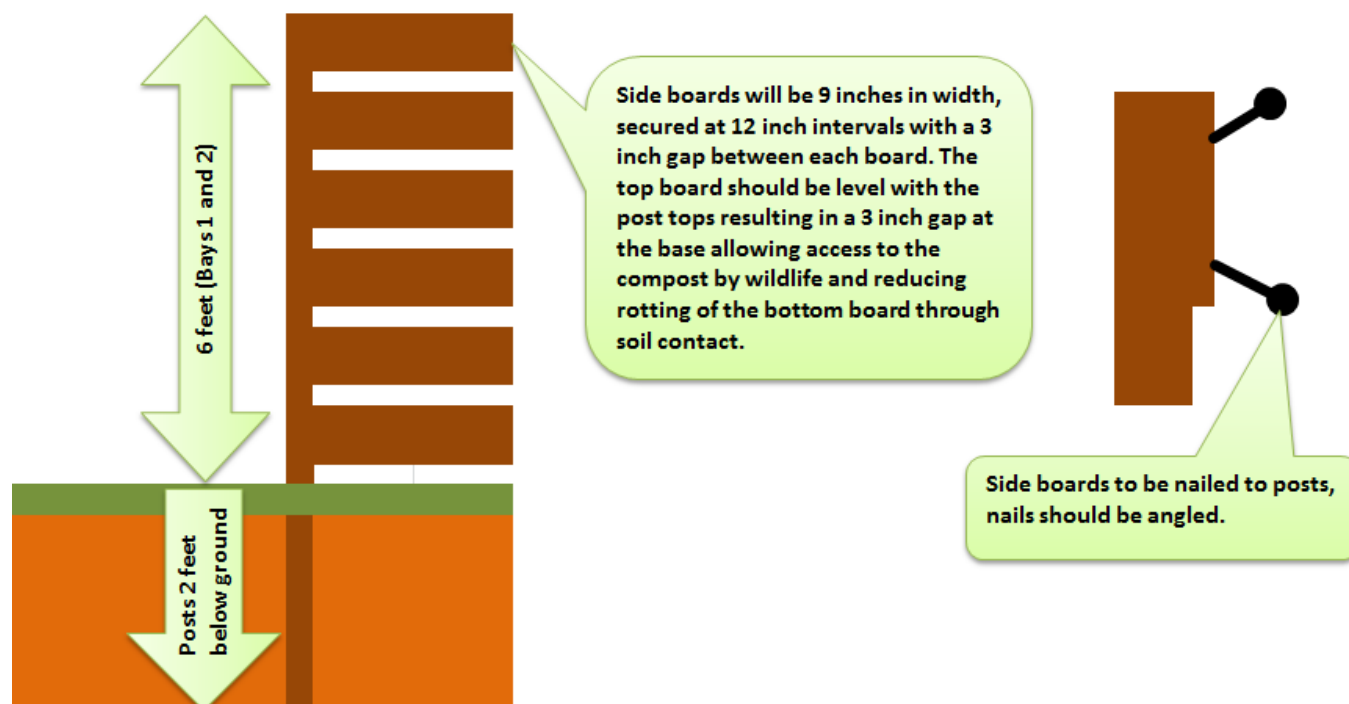
Notes

- It is possible that wildlife such as mice, voles, hedgehogs and slowworms are resident in the existing heap, please try not to harm them. We are advised any rats have departed.
- The existing compost heap extends into the area between the railings and Bay 1, this may be left (if time permits it can be moved into the completed bays at the end of the day). This area also contains some wildlife features which at the moment are hidden by vegetation. It is hoped to make this into a wildlife area during the autumn.

Construction



- The width and depth of the bays will be determined by the length of the boards expected to be 10 feet.
- The relative position of boards and posts for the different bays avoids having to secure two boards at the same point on the same side of the post.



Acknowledgements

Task organised by Econet Conservation Group, www.econetreading.org.uk.

Additional tools provided by the Reading Office of *The Conservation Volunteers*, www.tcv.org.uk and Maiden Erlegh Local Nature Reserve, www.maidenerleghlnr.org.uk.