

SCIENCE & PLANTS FOR SCHOOLS

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Making a compost column

You need: 4 x 2 litre, plastic, soft drink bottles (labels removed); fine net mesh; plastic insulating tape; old tights.

To remove the label cleanly: Fill the bottle with hot water (not too hot or it will buckle).

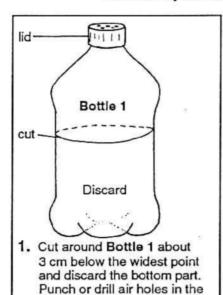
Screw the cap back on the bottle and in a short time the label should peel off.

Empty the water out of the bottle.

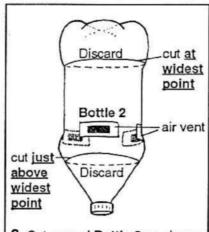
*Safety note: Always be very careful when working with hot water.

Sharp scissors have to be used to cut the bottles, if you have a ragged cut-edge on the

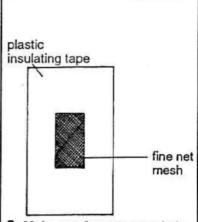
bottle it may scratch fingers and hands. Care should be taken at all times.



lid.

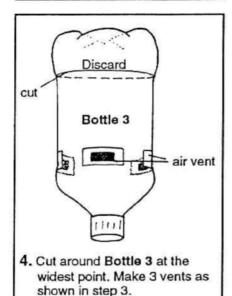


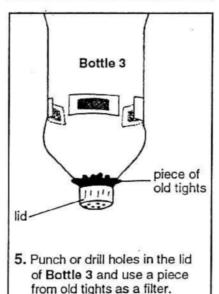
Cut around Bottle 2 as shown. Cut 3 air vents in the central section (step 3). Air vents help to encourage aerobic decay organisms.



3. Make an air vent: cut a hole in the side of the bottle, 15 x 8 mm. Cut a similar hole in a strip of plastic insulating tape and cover it with a piece of fine net mesh. Stick the tape over the hole in the bottle.

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cut at widest point

Bottle 4

coloured plastic base

6. Cut Bottle 4 as shown.

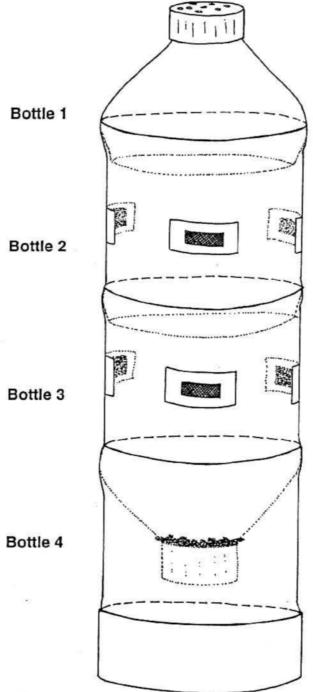
A bottle with a coloured plastic base provides a more stable base unit.

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SCIENCE AND PLANTS FOR SCHOOLS: Supermarket science

Fit the pieces together to make a complete compost column



Fit each section of bottle inside the section below it. This reduces the chance of algae growing in the area where the bottles join.

Use your compost column to find out which materials are biodegradable.

Examine the column every day using a hand lens and keep a record of what you see.

If you chop things up before putting them in the column does this make any difference to what happens?

is there a difference in what happens if the material you put in the column is wet or dry?

Do you have a liquid collecting at the bottom of the column? If yes, what colour is it and what could you do with it?

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