

2025

A GUIDE TO REPURPOSING BROWN BINS





Converting unused bins into water butts, wormeries, compost bins & more!

In 2023, many brown wheelie bins in South Hams became redundant due to the garden waste collection by South Hams District Council (SHDC) becoming chargeable. We have worked with SHDC to explore the potential for repurposing, upcycling, and reusing the bins to save resources.

Together with our friends at Sustainable South Brent, we collated existing ideas and experimented to see how viable it would be to convert the bins into compost bins and other options, including hot composters, worm farms, bokashi bins, and water butts. The smaller 180 litre bins come in different shapes and sizes and were more amenable for conversion than the larger, less practically converted 240 litre bins. Here are our findings...

We recommend being aware of your limits in relation to DIY to make sure you avoid risk of injury from power tools!

Water Butt

Possibly the simplest and most practical and effective use of the bins was to convert them into water butts, which gardeners increasingly need with our changing climate.

Great guides for making a wheelie bin into a water butt can be found here:

Guide - [Buckinghamshire water butt conversion guide](#)

Blog - [Build a self-cleaning rainwater tank from a wheelie bin](#)

Video - [convert a wheelie bin into a water butt](#)

Wormery

Another successful option (with limitations) was to create a wormery for food scraps. This step by step guide from The Urban Worm demonstrates how to create one:

Guide - [The Urban Worm](#)

Our conclusion is that worm farms are better built horizontally rather than vertically - so wheelie bins may not be the best option. We recommend a 2 feet maximum vertical height for worm casts/bedding, as too much weight on the material and worms below can become too much and will produce anaerobic (de-oxygenated) conditions for the worms.

Sustainable South Hams has some remaining Urban Worm conversion kits available if any communities would like to experiment and try them out for use at village halls or community centres. Contact us at info@sussh.org to find out more.

Compost Butt

Our conclusion was that the best use of the bins was as a water butt. However, there are many existing videos and guides to convert a compost bin from a wheelie bin:

Blog 1 - [How to Make a Compost Bin from a Wheelie Bin](#)

Blog 2 - [Make a Compost Bin from a Wheelie Bin](#)

Video - [Turn Your Wheelie Bin into a Compost Bin](#)

Hot Compost Video - [Make compost in your wheelie bin in 30 days.](#)

Compost Loo

Wheelie bins can even be turned into a basic compost toilet, making good use of humanure as a valuable resource!

Video - [How to Make a Compost Toilet with a wheelie bin](#)

Bokashi Compost Bin

After some experimenting we found that the vertical wheelie bin system for bokashi composting was too heavy and difficult to empty and manage. If you want to explore this idea with a different container here are some links:

Blog - [How to make a DIY bokashi bin](#)

Blog and videos - [How to build a DIY bokashi bucket](#)

Good luck experimenting and please do get in touch to share your stories with us at info@sussh.org so we can inspire others to share our love of composting!

With thanks to South Hams District Council for funding and supporting this project and Sustainable South Brent for their practical support.