

## TOPIC – COMPOSTING

Janie introduced Shirley who gave us a very comprehensive talk on her compost system that we had seen at her backyard garden.

### Compost:

- 3 black plastic bins with well-fitting lids, sitting on firm wire mesh (close woven to stop rats and mice tunnelling in). Place in area that gets some shade - worms and compost organisms don't like it too hot. 3 bins better than 2 as it allows time for material to rot down. Beware of vents falling out and allowing vermin in!
- fill up in turn with layers of vegetable scraps, spent plants, torn up paper and egg cartons, odd leaves, coffee grounds, contents of vacuum bag, chook or cow manure etc. the aim is to get a good balance of "brown and green" material – not too much of the one thing and not too wet. Manure acts as an accelerator.
- no meat or dairy.
- no weeds or problem plants.
- small amounts of citrus and onion skins mixed in are allowable.
- use compost as a layer on garden beds and pots (approx. 25-50mm) and let worms incorporate it into soil, especially when removing plants and replanting. Mulch layer on top to keep moisture in.
- sandy soil needs composting more often.
- compost tumblers are good if space allows.

### Mulch

Shirley has a system of 4 timber bins with lids, on the ground, and 2 shredders – 1 for coarser material and 1 for finer.

Bin 1 – has no lid. Cuttings, prunings etc waiting to be mulched.

Bin 2 – old potting mix and compost not being used.

Bin 3 - newly mulched material.

Bin 4 – older material ready to go onto garden.

Use mulch on top of garden to conserve moisture and to protect against extremes of temperature. Put down chook-type pellets or other nitrogenous material under the mulch to prevent nitrogen drawdown in the breakdown process.

