



GET THOSE LEAVES GATHERED!

The end of November, and leaf fall is at its maximum. Everywhere there are leaves, and leaves make leafmould. Leafmould is a great soil improver, just like homemade garden compost and well rotted manure; the more soil improver you put on your garden or allotment, the better the soil and the better plant growth. Two points: leafmould is acidic, so on the fruit and vegetable plots (but NOT blueberries) also add lime. Also leafmould contains very little plant nutrient, so you must add this in the form of fertiliser.

In 2020 peat will not be available for potting composts, and thus far the peatless ones are pretty poor. But use leafmould instead of peat and you have great compost. Simply put the leafmould through a garden-riddle, and mix it with sharp sand or grit and, if you want more of a John Innes compost, some loam. Plus fertiliser. I am now using this for many container-grown plants such as tomatoes and melons.

Collect as many leaves as possible in strong black polybags. Up to two years ago I collected 20-30 bags every year from roadsides (try Rob Lane!) but now I have another source. Drive up the M6 to J27 and turn left on the Parbold road. Ignore the right turn to Ecclestone, but then, about 300 yards from the M6 there is a Catholic Church with large car park on the right. Drive to the back right hand corner of this car park, and there you will see a big pile of leaves. Under the fresher leaves of 2013 are those from earlier years in or almost in the form of leafmould. Fill as many bags as you wish, Fr Mulhearn has given permission for any member of our Association to collect as much as we want! I pass here two or three times per week on my way to the Ribble estuary and Martin Mere, and so far have gathered about 35 heavy bags of the stuff, and there are loads left!

Put leaves or leafmould into wire-netting pens or compost bins. Keep moist. Fresh leaves take two years to make leafmould. The older stuff from Fr Mulhearn's leafpile should be ready next spring.

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