

HOW TO RAT PROOF YOUR COMPOST

Home composters are typically either round or square (as pictured) and have an open bottom which means rats and mice can easily burrow in to snack on your food waste before it becomes compost. It's easy to make these popular composters rodent proof. This guide will take you through the steps on how to do it.

Materials and equipment

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Galvanised wire mesh approx a 1.25m x 1.25m square as it needs to fit over the bottom of the bin with a good 10-20 cm overlap. Mesh holes should be no bigger than 1.25cm (rice and mats can squeeze through anything bigger).
- (Approximately) 20 plastic cable ties

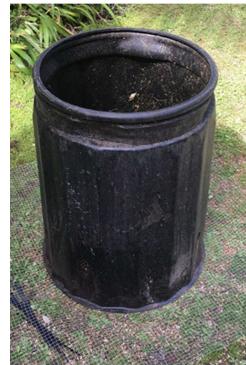
If you have a **square bin** you will also need

- Study tin snips or cutting pliers, ideally with blades set at an angle from the handle as they keep your hands clear of the mesh while you cut
- A drill and drill bit approximately 5mm diameter. The drill hole size needs to be sufficient for your cable ties to pass through, so if you are using wide cable ties, you'll need a bigger drill.



STEP 1 – layout the wire mesh

If your mesh is in a roll, it will want to spring back on you as soon as you let it go. It's helpful to weigh down the edges with something heavy like old bricks or a piece of wood while you work. Ideally you want 10-20 cm overlap on each side of the bin. This is so you can 'wrap' the bottom of the bin thoroughly later. The compost pictured above also has sliding doors and ventilation holes which after time, can break and become big enough for rodents to enter. The mesh should be long enough to cover all of these potential rodent entry points.



STEP 2 – Fold and wrap the wire mesh

Using a piece of wood and/or bricks as weights and fold the mesh one side at a time. Each fold needs to be as close to the bottom of the bin as possible and extend at least 10 cm up the side of the bin when done.



STEP 3 – (square bins) cutting wire to fold

Once the fold is made, cut along the fold line (indicated by red lines in the pictures below) until you are about 1-2 cm short of reaching the bin. This will create a wire mesh flap which can then be folded around the bin (indicated by the yellow arrow) so that it sits underneath the next side to be folded up.



Continue to work your way around the bin, one side at a time. Folding up each side, then cutting along the fold line so that the wire mesh flap can be wrapped around the next corner. Don't worry if it's not perfect, the cables ties will pull it all tight and make it look good later.

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STEP 4 – cable ties the mesh to the composter

If you have a **round bin** you should be able to fold the wire and cable tie it securely by only using the aeration holes - if you connect two cable ties together. Ensure the aeration holes are completely covered. Keep the ties loose until you been right around the bin.

For a **square bin**, you can use a combination of your drill and the existing aeration holes to thread your cable ties through the mesh and the plastic of the composter. This is so that you can use the cable tie to pull the mesh tight against the plastic surface of the composter. Keep the holes a couple of centimetres apart - ideally you want to lace-up at least 2 mesh squares when pulling it tight.

Try and gather up the edges and seams of the mesh where it overlaps or is bulging out, this will make sure everything fits nice and snug when you pull the cable ties tight.



STEP 5 – no more rats in your compost!

You can also cut off the cable tie ends. Just be aware that this can leave a small sharp piece of plastic sticking out; so aim to cut them as close as possible to the locking mechanism on the cable tie and make it a square (right-angle) cut; as opposed to diagonal which makes them even sharper

Tip: Rats are attracted to places where they can find food so place your trap next to your rat proof compost and make the most of the compost aromas to help lure rats into your trap.

