

## Rats - steps for prevention

1. Turn the contents of your compost bin regularly (at least twice per year). This not only disturbs any rats that have taken up residence but also aerates your compost heap which speeds up the process of digestion and reduces the amount of methane (a greenhouse gas) your heap emits. Have a shovel ready to hit any escaping rats over the head as you do it!
2. Plastic compost bins should be given a small gauge wire mesh lining at the base or can be placed on paving slabs to prevent rats from burrowing in from underneath.
3. Regularly kick your compost bin to ensure that it is not a peaceful place for rats to sleep and check that they are not taking up residence in your greenhouse!
4. No household waste!! Never put meat, dairy, bones, cooked food, or other inappropriate items in your compost bin. This will attract rats and make your bin smell.
5. Harvest ripe fruit and vegetables promptly and take them home to enjoy (before somebody else eats them!).
6. Do not leave discarded/unwanted fruit and vegetables on the ground; clear them away to your compost bin, as they will otherwise be a source of food to rats and other pests.
7. Keep your plot tidy and ensure that allotment gardens do not become overgrown and do not allow rubbish to build up, such as timber, stockpiled materials etc, as this provides cover for rats to live under (harbourage).
8. Remember to thoroughly wash (and peel if appropriate) any food you harvest. Vegetables with signs of rat damage should be destroyed. Rats carry a risk of salmonella and leptospirosis among other things and they urinate wherever they go!
9. Sheds should be kept secure and not allow access to rats or mice. Regular checks should be made to ensure that rats are not living underneath sheds.
10. Consider storing seeds, bulbs etc in rodent proof containers.