

Charging for garden waste collections FAQs March 2021

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It has not been an easy decision but Council finances are under pressure, even more this year than before and garden waste is not a statutory service. To protect essential services such as care and support for the most vulnerable people in our community the introduction of an annual charge will cover the costs of the service and make it self-financing.

The changes being made to the garden waste service will also make a positive contribution to the climate emergency by encouraging home composting, which is the most environmentally-friendly and sustainable way to dispose of garden waste.

1. Is it legal to charge for the collection of garden waste?

Yes. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, councils can charge for the collection of garden waste. Currently two-thirds of councils charge including all our neighbouring councils.

2. When will I have to pay?

You can sign up to the new service from 1 March online at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/gardenwaste or phone **01934 888 888**. Households which have not signed up and paid by 1 April, will not receive garden waste collections after this point.

3. How much will it cost?

It will cost £50 per bin for collections for a one-year period. The service runs from 1 April – 31 March each year. There is an 'early bird' 10% discount on your first bin if you sign up and pay by Sunday 28 March 2021.

4. What will the charge cover?

If you sign up and pay you will receive garden waste collections for a one-year period between 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022. Collections will be fortnightly for most of the year and monthly during December, January and February (when less garden waste is produced). If you don't have a bin or request to swap the size of your bin, the £50 charge will also include delivery or exchange of a garden waste bin.



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5. Can I sign up part-way through the year?

You can sign up at any point during the year however, it will still cost £50 for the remainder of the year until 31 March 2022

6. I already have a garden waste bin; do I still have to pay £50?

Yes, if you want to continue to receive a garden waste collection. Existing garden waste customers will receive a letter in early March which explains the new service and how to sign up. If you sign up by Sunday 28 March 2021 there will be a 10% discount on the price of the first bin.

The terms and conditions of the previous garden waste service clearly state that the £25 one-off registration fee was for the administration of the service and customers did not purchase a bin. All bins remain the property of North Somerset Council.

7. I have an assisted collection for garden waste, will this continue if I sign up?

Yes, if you currently receive an assisted collection for your garden waste and you sign up for the new chargeable service you will continue to receive an assisted collection as before. You do not need to contact us to arrange this.

8. Is there still the option to have two different bin sizes?

No, to simplify the service and make ordering bins more efficient and cost effective, all new addresses signing up to the service will receive a 240L garden waste bin as standard. This is the largest of the bin sizes previously offered. If you already have a smaller 180L bin, you should continue to use this bin unless you request to swap to the larger bin. Properties with access or storage issues for a bin are provided with garden waste sacks. Three sacks are equivalent to one bin.

9. I currently pay for a smaller bin can I swap this to a bigger bin?

Yes, you can select this as part of the sign up process.

10. Isn't this paid for by my council tax?

Council tax is part of the national taxation system set by central government. Council tax is not dedicated to the provision of specific services from the council. Garden waste collection is not a statutory service, this means there is no legal requirement to collect it. Instead of not providing a service we are offering a chargeable service where the income from charging for garden waste collections will make the service self-financing, which will free-up resources to protect essential services.

11. How do I pay?

You can sign up and pay by following the sign up link on the website www.n-somerset.gov.uk/gardenwaste. If you are unable to pay online, you can phone council connect on **01934 888 888** who will discuss other payment options.

12. How will you know who has paid?

When you sign up and pay you will be posted a letter with a permit sticker for your bin or tag for bags. All bins which have been paid for should have the permit displayed for the crew to easily identify and collect it. The crew will also have all the addresses, which have paid for in the vehicle and will only be collecting from those properties signed up.

13. How can I stop other people using the bin I have paid for?

You should store the bin on your property until collection day, so others do not have easy access to it.

14. I currently put garden waste from council owned land into my garden waste bin, but I don't want to pay to continue to do this. What can I do?

Thank you for caring for your local environment and helping to keep it tidy. You may want to look at alternative free options for managing this waste such as home or community composting, making leaf mould, or taking the waste to a recycling centre. We are unable to provide free or discounted bins if you choose to put garden waste from the surrounding area in your bin.



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15. If I don't sign up, what can I do with my garden waste?

You can home compost which is the most environmentally friendly and cheapest way of dealing with your garden waste. Alternatively, you can take your garden waste to one of our three household waste recycling centres. We will also be encouraging more community composting schemes in the future, like the one in Winford.

16. Won't people just fly-tip or put it in their black bin?

The evidence from other neighbouring councils is not the case. We all have a responsibility to reduce our impact on the environment and fly-tipping is illegal. Our Waste Enforcement Team actively pursue all reports of fly-tipping and we encourage residents to come forward should they witness any acts of fly-tipping. Garden waste should not be placed in the black bin and crews may not collect.

17. How does charging help the environment and climate emergency?

Charging for garden waste along with promotion of home composting will encourage more people to switch to home composting as the cheapest and most sustainable way to deal with garden waste. It also provides a free, nutrient-rich soil enhancer to help your plants grow better and less or no bins to remember to put out for collection. This results in fewer vehicles required to collect the garden waste across North Somerset and fewer lorry loads to transport from Weston-super-Mare to be commercially composted in Gloucestershire. This will make a positive contribution towards the council's carbon emissions target to become carbon neutral by 2030.

18. Our household is on a low income. Will we still have to pay £50 if we want to receive the service?

Households which qualify for the council tax support scheme will also qualify for a reduced rate on the garden waste collection service. The percentage of discount applied will be the same as the percentage discount received for council tax and this will be done automatically based on your address. If you don't qualify for this scheme but are really struggling to afford the service, please contact us by emailing gardenwaste@n-somerset.gov.uk or call **01934 888 888**.



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19. Can I have a garden waste collection if I live in a flat?

If you live in a flat but you have your own garden, you can still sign up for the service. If you have communal gardens you should contact your managing agent or housing association, as they will be responsible for the removal of garden waste.

20. Can I share a garden waste bin with my neighbour?

You can share a garden waste bin with your neighbour as an informal arrangement, but payment must be made by one householder and the bin will be assigned to one address only.

21. What can I put in the garden waste bin?

You will still be able to put all the same garden waste items in your green garden waste bin or bags as before. This includes all grass cuttings, prunings, weeds, leaves, hedge clippings, twigs and branches up to a maximum of 10cm in diameter.

If you have branches larger than 10cm in diameter, please take them to your local North Somerset recycling centre and place in the wood container.

22. Can I take the service with me when I move house?

No, the garden waste bin is registered to one address only. If you move, the new residents will benefit from the remainder of the collections for the year. Please do not take the bin with you as it will not be collected from your new address. If you don't have a collection at your new address but you would like one, then please sign up and pay again.

23. What will happen if someone puts their garden waste bin out for collection, but they have not signed up to the service?

During the start-up period of the service the crew will initially collect bins but leave a hanger to remind people of the change to the service and the need to pay. Following this notice, if the property has not signed up, the crew will leave the bin unemptied.

24. How are you promoting home and community composting?

You can buy a discounted home compost bin for just £10 during 2021. This includes access to a free online e-learning course to help you make the most of your bin. We are also running a series of free training sessions via Zoom, at various times. These will be hosted by a composting expert and available to book onto by emailing gardenwaste@n-somerset.gov.uk

Later in the year we will be working with Town and Parish Councils to develop community composting and look at the availability of shredders and other composting accessories to support more garden waste to be home composted. Shredders make woody material smaller and break down better in a home compost bin.

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25. What happens to the garden waste collected by the council?

The vehicles take their load back to the depot at Winterstoke Road, Weston-super-Mare where it is tipped into a garden waste bay. It accumulates until a load is ready to be transported to Enovert's composting facility in Gloucestershire. Here it is processed into compost using open windrow composting. The finished compost takes around 10 weeks to produce and is then sold by Enovert to commercial and agricultural customers.



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