

Climate Change Interest Group – Sponsored by Maresfield Parish Council

Local Climate Change Challenge

The Climate Change Interest Group is made up of local people and our aim is to challenge Maresfield Parish residents to make changes in a variety of areas for the good of the environment. We hope you feel inspired to join in with some of our suggestions and would welcome your feedback.

April 2021 – The importance of using Peat Free Compost

The days are getting brighter and we are thinking about sowing seeds and potting up cuttings and seedlings. Have you considered buying peat-free compost this year?

Why are peat bogs vital for us?

When you dig up peat that's two meters (7ft) below the surface, it is about 8,000 years old. Plants in this peat clump lived and died before the Egyptians constructed the pyramids and before humans invented the wheel. This is history and carbon gold.

Peatlands are the UK's largest on land store of carbon, holding three times as much as all of our woodlands.

Peatlands are the superheroes of ecosystems: they purify water, sometimes mitigating flooding and providing a home for rare species. Known peatlands only cover about 3% of the world's land surface, but store at least twice as much carbon as all of Earth's standing forests. In addition, at least one-third of the world's organic soil carbon, which plays a vital role in mitigating climate change and stabilizing the carbon cycle, is in peatlands so peat bogs are the one of most essential ecosystem.



Why should you buy peat-free compost for your garden?

For general potting a **peat-free compost** has the benefit of holding moisture well and releasing nutrients slowly and over a long period of time, which is ideal for planters and containers.

Did you know that multi-purpose compost, unless it is labelled 'peat-free', can contain between 70% and 100% peat? There are clear environmental reasons why we should be concerned about using even small amounts of peat. British peat bogs store the carbon equivalent to about 20 years' worth of national industrial emissions.

Peat-free compost on the other hand is a totally natural and eco-friendly product with a wide range of uses. It can contain ingredients such as recycled garden materials, bark fines and wood fibre to a strict quality specification, helping us make the most of the waste we throw away and contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions.

If you are looking for an effective soil improver, it is much better to use a **peat-free** product. Any bulky organic material can be used to improve the organic content of soil, but peat is low in nutrients and too fine, so peat-free alternatives are a much better option.

Peat-free compost is ideal for potting up established seedlings and general repotting but is not always ideal for sowing seeds. When using peat-free compost for seed sowing try to sieve it and mix it with vermiculite to give it a nice open structure which works well for seeds.

Of course, composting your kitchen waste, such as fruit and vegetable peelings and tea bags, along with your garden waste such as lawn clippings and prunings is a really easy way to make your own compost to help your garden bloom. Homemade compost is the perfect nutrient-rich food for your garden and will help improve soil structure, maintain moisture levels and keep your soil's pH balance in check. It has everything your plants need, including nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium and it will help improve soils that are very acidic or alkaline.

So why not give **peat free compost** a chance this year? Or in other words, bog off the peat.

Our group meets, currently via zoom, once per month and you are welcome to join our meetings, please contact Nancy for details or with any feedback or suggestions you may have.

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