Garden waste collections - frequently asked questions

Why is the garden waste service charged for?

Due to the government funding cuts, Sunderland City Council must make saving amounting to a total of £105m between 2015 and 2020 and it is not possible to fund the garden waste collection service from current budgets. We have considered alternative options such as reducing the frequency of collections, but this would not have made the required savings.

Is this service not included already in the council tax?

No, it is not included in Council Tax. We have previously provided the service free of charge but are no longer able to sustain this due to budget cuts. However, we tried to keep the charges as low as possible.

Will I pay less council tax if I subscribe to the garden waste scheme?

No, this service is not included in Council Tax. It is a non-statutory service which means the council is not legally obliged to run it.

Is this garden waste charge not against the recycling policy the council promotes?

The council will continue to promote recycling as a priority, and recognises that this may have a negative impact on recycling rates, This is estimated to be 2%.

Will a charge be introduced in the near future for other recycling and household waste?

There are no plans to introduce a charge for collecting household waste or recycling waste in the blue bins.

Subscriptions

Why should I subscribe to the service before 1 March 2019?

If you subscribe before 15 March 2019 you are guaranteed to receive all 17 collections between April-November 2019.

Subscribing before this date also allows us to plan the routes better, reducing fuel consumption and maximising efficiency. It also gives us enough time to deliver the garden waste sticker and any additional bins which have been requested.

Can I subscribe after 1 March 2019?

Yes, you can subscribe any time during the year but you will only receive the remaining collections of this service, and you will still pay the same price.

What if I don’t want to pay for the service?

If you do not wish to sign up for the new garden waste service, your garden waste bin will not be emptied.

How do you know if I paid my subscription?
Once you subscribe for the service this will be automatically recorded in our system. The garden waste collection vehicles can access this information. You will also be provided with a sticker for your bin, to confirm that you have paid for collections, and helps the crews identify which bins to collect easily.

**How can I pay for this service?**

You can sign up online at [www.sunderland.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/gardenwaste)

**If I cancel my subscription, will I get a refund?**

No. There are no refunds given.

**Do I pay a lower rate if I join towards the end of the year?**

No. The price is a fixed charge regardless of when you join the service.

**Do I have to pay the same garden waste charge as anyone else even though I am on benefits / I am a senior citizen?**

Yes. There are no concessions.

**Do I get any discounts if I need more than one bin?**

The price is £32.50 per year to have your first bin emptied, and an additional £20 per year per bin for any additional bins, up to a maximum of four. You are entitled to receive your first bin free of charge, however, if you require additional bins there is a charge of £25 per bin. This is a service charge for the delivery of the bin, which cannot be collected in person.

**I never received this service in the past. How do I know if I can opt in/ if I am eligible for this service?**

If you received the garden waste service in the past you can expect to be eligible to subscribe again.

If you have a property with a garden, you are likely to be eligible, unless the property is either too remote or it cannot be accessed by our collection vehicles. Due to these reasons each case will be considered by a Refuse Manager.

**I do not have much garden waste. Can I share a garden waste bin with a neighbour?**

Yes, the charge is per bin and there are no issues with this practice. You or your neighbour will need to decide who is to register for the service and make the payment.

**I have a really big garden. How many bins can I get?**

The maximum number of bins we are willing to empty from one property alone is four, since more than that might create logistical problems for the crews.

**Why do I need to have the sticker / my address on the back of the garden waste bin, beneath the handle and what type of pen should I use?**

The sticker and address will make it easier for the crew to identify, collect and return the garden waste bin to the right property..
You must leave the bin at the kerbside with the handle facing the road, as normal, so it is easier for the crews to see the sticker if it is beneath the handle.

In regard to the pen that could be used, a permanent marker would be the best.

**Garden bins and collection**

**Why is garden waste not collected all year round?**

During the winter months the service is suspended as there is little garden waste. If you consider that you need to recycle your garden waste during these months you can arrange for a bulky collection or alternatively place it in a compost bin yourself or you can take the garden waste to one of the household waste recycling centres.

**If I have no garden waste bins at all and I want to subscribe, do I have to pay to have the bin delivered?**

If you have no garden waste bins then then we will deliver you a bin free of charge.

**Will my collection day change/be the same?**

We cannot guarantee that your collection day will be the same as your current day. You will receive a calendar as part of your joining pack which will detail your collection day.

**My bin sticker is damaged or lost. Can I get another one?**

Stickers will be replaced free of charge. Contact us if you need a new sticker on 0191 520 5550.

**My garden waste bin is stolen / lost. Can I get another one?**

You will need to contact us so we can arrange a replacement. There is a charge of £25 per garden waste bin replacement which pays for the delivery of the bin. Bins cannot be collected in person.

**Can I get a bigger/smaller bin?**

No. All bins are of standard size, which is the same size as the recycling bin. If you consider one bin is not sufficient you are able to order additional bins at a cost.

**If I have additional garden waste will you collect it if it does not fit in the bin?**

No side waste will be taken.

**I currently get assisted collections. Will I get help with taking out my bin?**

Yes, nothing changes in this regard. You will continue to receive help with bringing your bin to the kerbside and having it returned on your property.

**If I pay for the service and then I move house, will I get a refund?**

The subscription is for the property only and the garden waste collection service is not transferable. The payment made is not refundable.

**What should I place in the garden waste bin and what I should not?**

Please do not place garden waste in plastic bags. Place it as it is directly in the bin.
Yes please: grass cuttings; weeds and dead plants; twigs and small branches; hedge clippings; cut flowers and houseplants; shrub prunings; leaves.

No thanks: food waste including meat, fish, fruit, salad and vegetables; plastic or plastic packaging; any packaging; vegetable peelings and egg shells; tea bags or coffee grinds; large items of garden waste, for example tree trunks; soil and rubble.

Do I get a refund if I had a missed collection?

There are no refunds, but we will come back as soon as we can to empty your bin if it has been missed due to bad weather or another reason which is our fault. Please leave your bin out and we will return to empty it.

I do not want the service anymore. Can you take my bin away?

You can make a request to have your bin removed, which is free of charge. However, we recommend that you keep your garden waste bin as there will be a delivery charge if you decide you want to subscribe at a later date. Besides, you can find it handy for the temporary storage of bin bags or garden tools.

Disposing of garden waste

Can I place the garden waste in the residual household bin?

You can place the garden waste in the household waste bin, but you have to consider that by doing this the rubbish bin will fill up sooner. Overloaded and heavy rubbish/recycling bins will not be emptied.

How can I dispose of garden waste if I do not wish to join the scheme?

- Composting - An alternative choice is to compost your garden waste. Composting is a natural process that transforms your uncooked vegetable kitchen waste and garden waste into a nutrient rich food for your garden. A home composter can turn around 30% of your total household waste into compost and it is easy to do.

  You can either make your own compost heap or buy a compost bin. Sunderland City Council has teamed up with getcomposting.com to provide a range of home compost bins and other green products at reduced prices. These are available to buy through the council’s website www.sunderland.gov.uk/composting

- Household Waste Recycling Centres – use the centres in at Beach Street, Deptford and Campground at Wrekenton for free. www.sunderland.gov.uk/recycling

- Bulky waste service – single £20 payment for less frequent, bagged garden waste

- Residual waste service - use of household waste collection bin

Can I burn my garden waste?

Garden waste tends to produce quite a lot of smoke which may amount to an offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. A smoky bonfire may amount to a nuisance for a neighbour if it limits their enjoyment of their gardens, preventing them hanging out washing or opening windows. Fumes can be damaging to health and affect air quality. Under section 80 of the Environmental Act 1990 an ‘abatement order’ can be issued and if the activity is not ceased a fine of £5,000 can be imposed.

Will there be an increased risk of fly-tipping?

The council is aware of a possible increase in fly-tipping. Across England, where other councils introduced a charge for this service, there has been no increase in fly-tipping, but we will be monitoring the number of
fly-tipping incidents and take action if there will be the need to do so. Fly-tipping is a criminal offence with a maximum fine of £50,000 under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.