

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Garden Waste

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## **When will the charges apply?**

The charged for garden waste service will take effect from Monday 2 April 2012 with collections continuing to be made on a fortnightly basis (with the exception of Christmas week).

## **How much will the service cost?**

The council's Cabinet has agreed to an annual charge of £26.00 per bin. There are no concessions or discounts for multiple bins. The charged for period will run from the start of April until the end of March the following year regardless of when in the year you join the scheme.

## **How do I subscribe to the service?**

We will be writing to residents in the New Year about how to sign up for the service. You do not have to join the scheme but you must pay if you wish to receive garden waste collections after 1 April 2012.

Payments can be made over the phone by calling 01594 810000 or in person at the Council offices during office hours using a debit or credit card. Unfortunately, we no longer accept payment by cash or cheque but we do accept postal orders. We also hope to be able to offer an online payment option.

## **How will the collection crew know whether I have paid my annual subscription charge and thereby know to empty my bin?**

Once your payment has been received you will receive a plastic licence (this will be a tag about the size of a credit card) through the post which will need to be affixed to your wheeled bin. This will be used to confirm that the bin is registered to your address. Bins without licences will not be emptied after April 2012. You will need a licence for each wheeled bin you present for emptying.

## **How long does it take to get my licence?**

It is anticipated that you should receive your licence within 14-days of making your payment. To ensure continuity of service, it is advisable to apply for your licence in advance so that you can have it ready to be displayed on your bin by 2 April.

## **What happens if I join the scheme after 2 April 2012?**

You are free to join the scheme at any time. However, as there is a set charge for the year (April-March) it makes sense to join early and maximise the number of collections you will receive. All licences will expire on 31 March regardless of when in the year you joined the scheme and the cost to you will be the same.

## **Are there any exemptions?**

Generally speaking, there are no exemptions. However, it is our intention to continue to pick up Christmas trees from all properties that present them for collection regardless of whether they have an annual licence or not.

## **Can I get a refund if I change my mind?**

No. The charges are non-refundable. This is because the administration costs would outweigh any benefit.

Also, in order to make the scheme viable and to keep the annual charge as low as possible for each household, we do not want to encourage a system whereby residents only choose to use the service during the growing months.

## **What happens if I am moving house?**

If you move house within the district and still require the garden waste service at your new property, you will need to contact us. You will be asked to send your current licence back to us. Upon receipt, we will organise for a new licence to be issued which will be valid for the remaining annual term and which will show your new address.

There will be no refund if you are moving outside of the district or to a property where you no longer require the garden waste service. However, new residents moving in to your old property will still be able to use the licence for the remaining period should you wish to leave it for them.

## **Will my collection day change?**

Not immediately. However, it is likely that some households will wish to discontinue the service once the charge is introduced. Therefore we may need to reconfigure some of our collection rounds to ensure they are working efficiently. We are hoping to keep changes to a minimum but we will let you know in good time if your collections are likely to alter.

## **Why has the council decided to charge for garden waste collections?**

The collection of garden waste is not a statutory requirement (i.e. we are not legally required to provide it). By introducing a charge for this service we are ensuring that only those residents who use the service pay for it.

Unfortunately, this will not mean a reduction in council tax bills as any savings will be used to invest in other areas of the service to further reduce waste to landfill and to cover increasing costs, such as rising fuel prices.

Our waste and recycling survey conducted in the spring on 2010 suggested that 68% of respondents did not want to pay for the service but 42% of respondents did feel it was reasonable for the council to introduce a charge.

The District Council also undertook a budget consultation last summer to ask residents which services they would like to see protected, reduced or stopped. While it is clear that many do value their garden waste collections, members of the public did feel this was an area which should be re-examined.

Based on this information a decision to charge was made as opposed to stopping the service.

Tewkesbury Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council already charge for garden waste collections. Stroud District Council do not currently provide a garden waste service to its residents.

### **If I do not wish to subscribe to the service, what else can I do with my garden waste?**

Garden waste can still be taken to the local Household Recycling Centre at Broadwell and disposed of for free.

Home composting is also an excellent way to recycle your garden waste.

### **What can I put in my garden wheeled bin?**

Your garden wheeled bin can be used for grass cuttings, leaves, bark, tree and hedge prunings, plants and weeds.

Please do not use your garden bin for soil or stones or compostable materials such as food waste, cardboard or paper. Please ensure that your bin is free from other garden refuse such as pots, seed trays, plastics, fencing and posts.

### **Will charging for garden waste encourage more bonfires?**

It is possible that there will be more bonfires as a result of charging for garden waste by those who do not wish to participate in the scheme. However, we will monitor the situation once charging begins and continue to promote home composting as an environmentally friendly alternative.

If a neighbour is causing a nuisance by having persistent bonfires, and there is sufficient evidence to support this, the council has authority under the Environmental Protection Act to serve an abatement notice. Failure to comply with an abatement notice is a criminal offence and could result in a fixed penalty notice or even prosecution.

### **Do I still need to pay for a garden wheeled bin?**

No. From February 2012, if you do not already have a garden wheeled bin and are subscribing to the service for the first time you will receive your bin free of charge. Bins will usually be delivered within 28 days of receiving your request.

### **Do I own the wheeled bin?**

No. The wheeled bin remains the property of the Forest of Dean District Council. If you move house, please leave your garden wheeled bin at the property for the next owner or tenant.

However, it is the responsibility of the householder to maintain their bin in a serviceable condition.

### **Do I still need a licence if I use garden sacks?**

Only a small number of households are permitted to put out garden sacks instead of a wheeled bin due to their dwelling type.

In these circumstances, you will not need to display a licence for your garden sacks. Instead, from 2 April 2012, you will need to purchase paper sacks in which to present your garden waste. The cost for 50 x 120ltr sacks, including delivery, is £26.00. The sacks are compostable and will bear the Council's logo to make them easily identifiable by the collection crew. No other garden waste sacks will be permitted.

### **What if I my garden waste licence is lost or stolen?**

If your licence is lost or stolen please contact our Customer Support Team on 01594 810000. You will then be sent a sticker to affix to your bin which will act as an interim licence until your next renewal period.

It is unlikely that licences will be stolen as they are only valid for the property against which they are issued. However, if you believe your licence has been stolen please report this to us when requesting your replacement.

### **Why does the Council continue to collect garden waste throughout the winter months?**

While it is true that most garden waste is collected between March and November, we still collected over 650 tonnes between December and February last year.

Some local authorities do suspend their garden service over this period but this is only possible when the crews are employed by the local authority. This means that their staff can be redeployed during this period to deliver other council services.

The Forest of Dean District Council employs a contractor to deliver its waste services and therefore it is not possible to stop and start collections in the same way.

However, we do suspend garden waste collections over the Christmas and New Year break and during this fortnight the spare crews and vehicles are used to support the refuse rounds.