



# Shovel-it Yourself Day, Leiston

6 May 2022



To mark [Compost Awareness Week 2022](#), residents were invited to bring a bag and a shovel and help themselves to free soil improver at this Shovel it Yourself event organised by East Suffolk Council in partnership with [Leiston Town Council](#) and [Net Zero Leiston](#). 15 tonnes of soil improver were donated by ESC's garden waste contractor, Biogen (UK) Ltd.

The event was supported by three volunteers from Leiston Town Council, a colleague from Net Zero Leiston, and a [Suffolk Master Composter volunteer](#). It was held in the car park of Sizewell Sports and Social Club, who provided staff and volunteers with toilet and hand washing facilities on the day.

It was promoted via a [press release](#) issued by ESC on the 26 April and a [flyer](#) produced by the Greenprint Forum. Posts were circulated on social media by the Greenprint Forum, Leiston Town Council, Net Zero Leiston and Visit Leiston on their respective social media channels (including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), and the Town Council put up posters in the local area. It was also promoted by Suffolk Recycling in their email to subscribers circulated on 28 April.

On the day the local Co-Op supermarket ran announcements over their PA system to help promote the event.

The press release urged those who were to do so to walk to the event and fill their wheelbarrow, to help cut the number of vehicle journeys, and whilst most people did turn up with the car or van we did have a few local residents turn up with their wheelbarrows, some making repeat visits on foot.



The response from the local community was overwhelmingly positive. Even though this was the first loose compost giveaway event to be held anywhere in East Suffolk since 2010, only about a tonne or so was left by the close of the event and we had approximately 96 people visit to take some of the product with many making repeat visits.

The soil improver was made from the garden waste that residents of the district place in their domestic green waste bins.

Biogen process our garden waste via [open windrow composting](#) at their site at Lackford in west Suffolk. This process is essentially like a giant garden compost heap, where the material is able to compost naturally in the presence of oxygen – an aerobic process resulting in a compost product that meets the industry standards for compost [BSI PAS 100](#), certified by the [British Standards Institute](#). As the process takes place in the open, it is not licenced to accept any food wastes or animal by products. The usual end destination for the majority of the end product that Biogen produce from our garden waste is for local agricultural use.



As well as being an ideal opportunity to say thank you to residents for recycling, in the form of free soil improver, the event also presented us with an opportunity to engage with residents on the topic of composting and in particular promote home composting, which is after all the most environmentally sustainable way of dealing with compostable waste as it all takes place on site without any need for transportation – with the added bonus to the gardener that they know exactly what went in. Suffolk residents can get their green fingers on any one of a range of subsidised home composting systems ranging from ordinary compost bins for garden waste and fruit and vegetable waste, as well as other systems that can help deal with some cooked food waste too. Find out more about the current offer by visiting <http://www.suffolk.getcomposting.com/>

Many of those who visited expressed a wish to see a repeat of this event in the future, and we also received requests from other communities prior to the event to ask if their community could have a Shovel-it Yourself Day. However, these events are quite resource intensive, requiring a team of people to help meet and greet, manage queues and provide assistance where required. As such East Suffolk Council would only be able to organise a maximum of one event per year and this would be dependent on the support of local community organisations – it would not have been possible for ESC to hold this event successfully had it not been for the support of Leiston Town Council and Net Zero Leiston.

