

Biomass Wood Ash Reuse

The ash produced from biomass boilers is high in potash which makes the ash valuable as a top dressing by farmers or as a component of composts by horticulturalists and keen gardeners.

What to do with the Ash in the Garden

The quality and composition of ash will often increase with a change in feedstock moisture level or the presence of higher bark content.

Wood ash from biomass boilers is a great soil improver. When used sparingly on the garden or compost heap it is great for a little extra nourishment. As a rule of thumb add 1 cup of fine powdery wood ash for every 4.2 m³ of compost/organic potting mix.

It is particularly effective to aid tomato growth since they enjoy a slightly alkaline pH. Here's how: before planting, pour ¼ cup of wood ashes in the hole where you will plant the tomatoes and plant as normal. If you have already planted the tomatoes (without adding ash first), sprinkle ¼ cup of ashes around the base of each plant and gently work into the soil with a garden rake.

Do keep in mind that wood ashes raise the soil's level of alkalinity so avoid using wood ash around acid-loving plants, including: potatoes, hydrangeas, rhododendrons, azaleas, tulips, and junipers. Always rinse hands and gardening tools thoroughly after handling wood ashes.

Other compounds in wood ash are naturally repellent to slugs and snails, making ash a great tool for keeping your garden pest-free. This can be done by spreading ashes evenly around the edges of garden rows.

Where Ash Cannot be used as Fertiliser

While it is not the wish of the Council, in situations where you cannot dispose of your biomass boiler ash as a fertiliser, or has other contaminants which make it unsuitable, it is possible to dispose of it as landfill waste.

In cases where a large boiler is fitted with flue gas cleaning equipment and the fly ash is collected separately, the ash may have to be classed as special waste due to concentration of any heavy metal in the fly ash exceeding a threshold value. At the moment there is not any regulation in the UK to stipulate that bottom ash and fly ash must be separated.