



PLANT CARE WITH COMPOST

Why Compost is so Valuable to Plant Growth

The reason compost is considered black gold is because compost is a high nutrient soil and plants love it. In this way, you can think of it as natural fertilizer! Compost is high in nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. These three nutrients are the most valuable to have in your soil for plants to grow. In fact, if you add these nutrients to the air (aeroponics) or water (aquaponics), plants will grow healthily without soil.

Aside from adding the proper nutrients to your soil, there are many other benefits to adding compost to your soil.

1. Adding compost to your soil will retain more water, which can reduce how often you need to water.
2. Compost is teeming with organic matter, also contributing to the moisture retention and promotes movement of water and nutrients to the roots.
3. Compost is a pH balancer. Although some plants prefer the soil to be high alkaline (lilac and forsythia) or high acidic (azaleas, hydrangeas, and blueberries), it is good to keep your soil balanced.



Using Compost in Your Garden

1. *Before you add plants in the spring:* After you have tilled (*some gardeners do not till, see reference) your garden bed, you can add 1 to 2 inches of compost on top. Give it a week or so for the rain to settle it, and then rake your garden bed lightly. This practice may also prevent weeds from sprouting!
2. *When planting annuals and vegetables:* Once you have dug holes to plant your young sprouts, add in a cup or less of compost to the hole. This will give the plant an extra boost such that fertilizer would.
3. *Throughout the growing season:* A couple times a year, you can sprinkle extra compost on the garden bed which is another way to give your plants a boost mid growth and improve water absorption. This technique is known as side dressing and best practice is to sprinkle it on the edge or next to the row of plants.
4. *Preparing your garden in the fall:* Once the growing season is over, you can start to prepare your garden for the spring. If you add compost in the fall, you do not necessarily need to add compost in the spring. Simply add a 1 to 2 inch layer of compost on top and let it soak in during the winter! This is a good practice for those who do not till.



Using Compost for Indoor Plant Care

1. *Transplanting*: When it's time to transplant, try blending compost in with your potted soil mix. You can add a 1:1 or 1:2 ratio of compost to potting soil. This method will keep your indoor plants naturally fertilized and have great absorption. That being said, you might have to alter your regular watering schedule because the soil will retain water differently.
2. *Adding as a seasonal fertilizer*: You can also add a 0.5 to 1 inch layer of compost to the top of your pots.

Extra References

Making compost tea: <https://learn.eartheasy.com/articles/the-best-compost-tea-recipe-to-help-your-plants-thrive>

*Why some gardeners do not till their garden bed:

<https://homesteadandchill.com/no-till-gardening-benefits/>