

FINISHED COMPOST may be used as soon as the temperature of the pile has stabilized. Finished compost has a pleasant earthy smell, few recognizable pieces of the original organic materials, and a dark brown or black color.

HARVESTING & AGING

- ☛ Remove unfinished compost and return it to the active bin.
- ☛ Sift compost through a 1/2" wire mesh for use on lawn or indoor plants.
- ☛ Dig fresh compost directly into garden beds. It will continue to decompose and feed your plants.
- ☛ **AGE** compost for 3 to 6 months in a protected spot with a cover. Nutrients will stabilize and be ready for plant use.



CAUTION - Be aware of "Organic Dust Toxic Syndrome." If you are prone to allergies, wear a mask or dampen material when handling. Compost and mulch contain tiny plant materials and are filled with bacteria and fungi.

AS A FERTILIZER

Compost has a NPK (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium) value of 1-1-1. Even with its low NPK, compost releases nutrients slowly throughout the growing season. Compost keeps nutrients from leaching during rain, unlike commercial soluble fertilizers.

☛ **Earthworm castings (vermicompost)** contain 5 times more nitrogen and 7 times more phosphorous than what is in topsoil. These nutrients are instantly available for plants' use and will not burn them as other animal manures can.



AS A MULCH

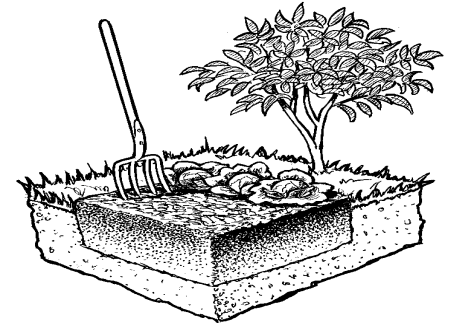
- ☛ Shields soil from sun, wind and rain.
 - ☛ Reduces soil compaction and erosion.
 - ☛ Maintains soil moisture and temperature.
 - ☛ Improves water penetration adding oxygen to roots.
 - ☛ Contributes to soil fertility.
 - ☛ Reduces weed germination and growth.
- ☛ **TREES** - 4 to 8 inches starting 1 foot from trunk to drip line.
- ☛ **SHRUBS** - 3 inches starting 2 inches from stem to drip line.
- ☛ **PLANTS** - Side dressing or in the rows.

DIG IT IN - SOIL AMENDMENT

- ☛ Adds air spaces to soil and promotes better drainage.
- ☛ Good home for worms and beneficial soil organisms.
- ☛ Add unfinished compost in the fall to decompose over winter.
- ☛ Add aged compost in the spring before planting.
- ☛ Add annually to gardens, flower beds, around trees and shrubs.
- ☛ **BUILD NEW BEDS** with 1 to 2" of compost for 4 to 6" of soil.

IMPROVE YOUR SOIL

- ☛ **CLAY or SANDY** - Dig 2 or 3 inches of compost in 6 inches of topsoil yearly.
- ☛ **LOAM** - Dig 1 inch of compost in 6 inches of topsoil yearly.
- ☛ **ONE INCH** of compost annually will help maintain soil fertility.



HOUSE PLANTS

- ☛ Thin top dressing
- ☛ Compost Tea
- ☛ Potting soil - equal amounts of loam, sand and compost

SPECIALITIES

- ☛ Top Dressing for **LAWNS** - 1/4 inch of sifted compost each season.
- ☛ **LIVING MULCH** - See *Compost Crops Flyer*
- ☛ **DISEASE PREVENTION** - One inch of compost mulch is the best plant disease prevention known to exist. No chemical fungicide can conquer disease better.
- ☛ **CONTINUOUS FERTILIZER** – Locate pile near a favorite tree or scrub. Some compost will be lost to the roots feeding on the compost.
- ☛ **COMPOST POULTICE** – Dampen compost slightly and lay it on a tree wound. Wrap the compost with a biodegradable material. Remove the wrap when a callus has formed. The microbial content of compost has disease fighting capabilities.



COMPOST TEA

REGULAR - Stir 1 part aged compost into 5 parts water, let sit a few minutes, then water plants. Add water 3 or 4 more times to compost. Tea sprayed directly on leaves increases nutrient absorption.

FERMENTED - Stir 1 part aged compost into 5 parts water. Ferment 10 to 14 days. Strain and spray thoroughly on diseased leaves to control botrytis molds, downy or powdery mildew and late blight. Fermented Tea makes plants more disease resistant. Repeat every two weeks.

ALTERNATE MULCHES

- ☛ **GRASS CLIPPINGS** - Use one inch of weed-free and chemical-free clippings. Grass is high in nitrogen and feeds plants as it decomposes. Keeps soil moist.
- ☛ **LEAVES** - Shredded or aged are best. Adds nitrogen. It is good for vegetables and existing beds but may attract snails.
- ☛ **PINE NEEDLES** - Excellent for paths. Will not change soil PH.
- ☛ **STRAW** - Protects tomatoes and other vegetables from soil diseases.
- ☛ **NEWSPAPER** - Shredded newspaper suppresses weeds and keeps soil moist. Use whole sheets covered with compost, grass or straw then cut holes for plants. Also try brown paper bags or cardboard.
- ☛ **BARK** - Durable, long lasting. Good for established plants not vegetables
- ☛ **WOOD CHIPS** - For paths and existing perennials
- ☛ **WOOD SHAVINGS/SAWDUST** – Beware, depletes soil of nitrogen.



Books

The Mulch Book, Let it Rot by Stu Campbell
Easy Composting, Ortho Books.

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USING COMPOST



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