

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

How to: Improve Garden Soil

Beginning gardeners picking a location for their garden will usually begin by tilling up the plot or purchasing soil to lay in a bed in preparation for planting. The garden establishment process is easy, but long-term soil maintenance can improve soil quality in turn improving the quality of the crops that grow there. Climate, vegetation and gardening can influence soil and how it is formed.

What is soil?

Soil is more than just dirt and is made up of three main components – minerals from rocks, organic matter from the remains of animals and plants using the soil, and current living organisms. It has many aspects that can affect its quality. Tilth is the soil's physical condition such as if soil is clumpy, if it has proper channels for water drainage and how its aeration is. Soil's water-holding capacity also is an important aspect as it must allow for good drainage but also hold enough water for the crops growing there. It also must have a high nutrient-holding capacity, which is the ability to hold onto nutrients which will then feed the crops.

Ways to improve soil:

There are several ways to improve garden soil, such as adding organic matter like manure. Livestock manure can add nitrogen to the soil but if planting leafy greens or root vegetables, wait three months from applying the manure to planting the crops to prevent contamination. Crops like tomatoes and corn aren't as subject to contamination, so a waiting period may not be necessary.



[Everything you need to improve your garden's soil available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)

Compost also can aid in soil health. Composting is a process of recycling organic matter such as paper, egg shells, coffee grounds and kitchen scraps. Applying compost can speed up the formation of soil humus and can apply slow-release nutrients aiding in improving soil water retention and preventing against diseases. However, composting is an ongoing process and not an immediate fix.

Cover crops are another natural avenue to be used to improve soil. Not only do the crops return nutrients to the ground when they die, they also protect ground from the elements while food crops aren't being grown. Although there are a wide variety of cover crops that can grow in almost any environment depending on the crop, gardeners that have two or more garden beds can alternate the crops from between cover crops and food crops so they don't miss a season of harvest.



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Protecting soil:

To ensure good soil quality, it is important to not only improve the soil but protect it as well. Constantly walking on soil or working with the soil when it is wet can harm the tilth. Soil that is exposed to the elements such as bad weather is more likely to be damaged, so be sure to protect it with crops, tarp or mulch.

Urban Farmer has everything you need to improve your garden's soil from fertilizers to cover crops on our website at ufseeds.com!



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