

Great reasons to use compost:

- You will significantly reduce pest problems – and your use of pesticides.
- Healthy plants from healthy soil look better, produce better and have a much greater ability to fight off pests and diseases.
- Adding organic materials to the soil improves moisture retention.
- Adding decomposed organic material to the soil feeds beneficial organisms.
- Compost amends both sandy and clay soils.
- Compost provides a balanced, slow – release source of nutrients that helps the soil hold nutrients long enough for plants to use them.
- Composting saves money – you avoid the cost of buying soil conditioners, bagged manure, etc.
- Feeding your plants well will improve your own diet. Plants grown in depleted soils have a reduced nutrient content.
- Home composting is a valuable tool in educating children about nature and the cycle of life.

Source: *RecycleWorks of San Mateo County*

How do I use it?

You should NOT mix fresh compost into the soil unless you are an experienced gardener, because the high nitrogen concentration can harm sensitive roots. **Never place plants in pure compost!**

However, there are several ways you CAN use compost, like.....

- As a soil amendment. It helps aerate the soil and helps sandy soils hold moisture.
- As a top dressing.
- As a tonic for ailing plants.
- As a mulch. Compost is not mulch, yet it can be applied in the same ways that mulches are used. Compost will not deprive your soil of nitrogen. Spread compost two to six inches thick around plants, trees, shrubs, and exposed slopes. This will deter weeds, prevent crusting, curtail erosion, attract earthworms, and conserve water.
- As a potting mixture. Finished compost can be combined with equal parts of sand and soil to create an excellent potting mix.
- Another way to use compost is to mix it with water to create a “compost tea” liquid fertilizer. There are many different techniques, but here’s one simple approach.

To make compost tea you will need a large bucket, a cloth sack and some rope or twine. Put some compost into the sack and tie closed. Place the sack into a bucket of warm water and let it steep for a few hours or days until the water is the color of a light tea. Use it to water house plants or your garden. However, compost tea does not have a long shelf life. Don’t store it for long periods, or it will become anaerobic and less beneficial for your plants. Compost tea is also known to cause disease suppression when sprayed on plants.



What is Compost?

Many gardeners consider compost “black gold.” Made of food scraps and yard trimmings, compost improves the fertility and quality of soil by adding organic matter and nutrients, leading to healthier plants that are more resistant to disease and insects. Quite simply, it’s a complete cycle for your soil. Food and plants are grown, consumed, and then the scraps go into your Compost Cart. Later, the finished compost is used to nourish the soil again. It’s a perfect example of closing the loop! Yard and food waste make up 30% of the waste stream. Composting your kitchen and yard trimmings helps divert that waste from the landfill, waterways and water treatment facilities.



For more information visit: <http://www.smcsustainability.org/>
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