



Colorado's Leader in Organic Recycling

## THE BENEFITS OF COMPOST

The following list of compost benefits will be applicable to all of the uses described below...

- ✓ Improves soil structure and porosity – creating a better plant root environment
- ✓ Increases moisture infiltration and permeability, and reduces bulk density of heavy soils – improving moisture infiltration rates and reducing erosion and runoff
- ✓ Improves the moisture holding capacity of light soils – reducing water loss and nutrient leaching, and improving moisture retention
- ✓ Improves the cation exchange capacity (CEC) of soils
- ✓ Supplies organic matter
- ✓ Aids the proliferation of soil microbes
- ✓ Supplies beneficial microorganisms to soils and growing media
- ✓ Encourages vigorous root growth
- ✓ Allows plants to more effectively utilize nutrients, while reducing nutrient loss by leaching
- ✓ Enables soils to retain nutrients longer
- ✓ Contains humus – assisting in soil aggregation and making nutrients more available for plant uptake
- ✓ Buffers soil pH
- ✓ Contains slow release nutrients, both macro and secondary
- ✓ Bioremediation uses compost to clean and restore contaminated soils by degrading and binding contaminants in soil. The process has been used both 'in-situ', where compost and other amendments are incorporated into a contaminated soil, and by removing the contaminated soils and adding them to a compost pile
- ✓ Compost has been proven to control plants diseases such as Pythium and Phytophthora root rot and Ashy Stem blight. It can also eradicate some types of pests such as nematodes.

*Compost encourages vigorous root growth and enables soils to retain nutrients longer!*

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These benefits are typically regarded as benefits to plant growth, but they are far more than that. They also pertain to how compost improves the soil, which impacts overall soil and plant quality, but also water quality and quantity .... and, therefore, the environment and human existence (and quality of life)!

### The addition of compost to the soil helps it...

- ✓ Be protected from wind and water erosion
- ✓ Retain larger volumes of water (a 1% increase in soil organic matter = 3 quarts of water/cubic foot of soil OR up to 27,000 gallons of water per acre, depending on soil type according to the US Department of Agriculture)
- ✓ Filter out and/or bind contaminants that might be contained in surface water

## Compost Uses

### HOW MUCH COMPOST DO I NEED?

Add compost at a rate of about 6 cubic yards (approximately 2") per 1,000 square feet and incorporated (rototilled) to a depth of 6 - 8 inches

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### PLANTING FLOWERS AND VEGETABLES / GENERAL SOIL AMENDING

Establishment: Compost should be uniformly applied over the entire area at an average depth of 1-2 inches and then incorporated to a depth of 6-8 inches using a rotary tiller or other similar equipment. Higher application rates of compost may be used if the compost is incorporated to a greater depth. Rake the soil surface smooth prior to seeding or planting. The soil surface should be free of large clods, roots, stones, and other material that will interfere with planting. The amended area should be watered thoroughly after planting.

Lower compost application rates may be necessary for salt sensitive crops (e.g., strawberries), or where composts possessing higher salt and nutrient levels are used, while higher application rates may be used for plants that require greater amounts of fertility (e.g., tomatoes).

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**Maintenance:** Apply a coarser compost mulch (1" – 2" screened) over the garden bed to conserve moisture, for weed suppression and/or for aesthetic purposes. Note: The nutrients contained in compost should be considered when applying fertilization. They will typically offset plant nutrient requirements, thereby potentially reducing fertilizer application rates.

## PLANTING AND MAINTAINING LAWNS

**Establishment:** Compost should be uniformly applied over the entire area at an average depth of 1-2 inches and then incorporated to a depth of 6-8 inches using a rotary tiller or other similar equipment. Higher application rates of compost may be used if the compost is incorporated to a greater depth. Rake the soil surface smooth prior to seeding, planting or sodding. Always seed, plant or sod during the recommended period of time in your region. The soil surface should be free of large clods, roots, stones, and other material that will interfere with planting and maintenance. The amended area should be watered thoroughly after seeding, sodding or planting.

**Maintenance/Topdressing:** Annual topdressing with a finer grade compost (1/4" – 3/8" screened) is a good maintenance practice on both cool and warm season lawns. This can be done before or after core aeration to reduce compaction and improve moisture holding capacity. Drag or rake compost into the aeration holes. Cool season lawns can be compost top-dressed in the early spring or fall. It's best to apply compost to warm season lawns in the spring just prior to the active growing season. The area should be watered thoroughly after any seeding. Note: The nutrients contained in compost should be considered when applying fertilization. They will typically offset plant nutrient requirements, thereby potentially reducing fertilizer application rates.

*Annual topdressing with a finer grade compost is a good maintenance practice!*

## PLANTING TREES AND SHRUBS

**Establishment:** Excavate a planting hole slightly shallower and 2 to 3 times the width of the root ball or container. Set the root ball on firm soil so that the top of the root ball sits slightly higher than the final grade. Uniformly blend compost with the excavated soil at one (1) part by volume compost to 2-3 parts by volume soil. Compost with higher amounts of salts and nutrients should be used at lower rates (e.g. 1:3 or 1:4 parts compost to soil). Backfill and firm the soil blend around the root ball within the planting hole. Always water thoroughly after planting. It should be noted that whenever possible, trees and shrubs should be planted in a mass planting bed,

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where multiple plants are established in a larger amended bed. This technique allows for greater planting success.

Lower compost application rates should be used for salt sensitive crops (e.g., conifers), or where composts possessing higher salt and nutrient levels are used, while higher application rates may be used for plants that require greater amounts of fertility.

**Maintenance:** Apply a coarser compost mulch (1" – 2" screened) over the garden bed to conserve moisture, for weed suppression and/or for aesthetic purposes. Note: The nutrients contained in compost should be considered when applying fertilization. They will typically offset plant nutrient requirements, thereby potentially reducing fertilizer application rates. Disclaimer: The USCC makes no warranties regarding this product or its contents, quality, or suitability for any particular use. Please refer to the individual producer's product label for specific use instructions.

## OTHER USES

### Make your own topsoil

- ✓ Mix 25% of compost, by volume with existing soil to create a high organic content, ready to plant topsoil

### Make your own potting soil

- ✓ Mix 20% of compost, by volume, with peat moss, pine bark, perlite, vermiculite or coarse sand for a more porous mix. You can also amend prepared potting mix, as long as it does not contain any fertilizer or other compost.

*You can make  
your own topsoil  
and potting soil!*

### Mulching

- ✓ Apply 2" to 3" of a coarser grade compost to planting beds as an attractive and effective mulch.

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