

Understanding Soil



Amendments

Soil Amendment: any material added to soil to improve overall soil health.

Compost:

a mixture that consists of decomposing plant and food waste, and/or manure. The resulting mixture is rich in plant nutrients and beneficial organisms, such as bacteria, protozoa, nematodes, and fungi.

General Uses: mix into top few inches of flower, vegetable and tree beds: mix with potting soil for indoor plants: or top dress a lawn/soil surface. Test soil and compost before applying. Compost can also be used as mulch.

Manure:

refuse of stables and barnyards consisting of livestock excreta with or without litter, material that fertilizes land.

General Uses: for land application; understand manure transformations and follow professional manure application guidelines for maximum fertilizer value with minimal environmental impact.

Mulch:

a protective covering spread or left on the ground to reduce evaporation, maintain even soil temperature, prevent erosion, control weeds, or keep fruit (such as strawberries) clean.

General Uses: only use composted wood mulch for a soil amendment.

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Biochar:

is a charcoal-like substance produced from wood waste. It is a lightweight, black material derived from biomass heated to high temperatures in an environment devoid of oxygen. It is composed of high levels of stable, mineralized carbon - typically over 75% by mass.

General Uses: biochar is typically applied together with compost.

Vermicompost:

is the product of the decomposition process using various species of worms, usually red wigglers, white worms, and other earthworms, to create a mixture of decomposing vegetable or food waste, bedding materials, and vermicast.

General Uses: can be mixed with potting media at a rate of 10% by volume, added directly into your soil; or mixed with water to make a liquid fertilizer.

Biosolids:

are byproducts of sewage treatment.

General Uses: after meeting stringent federal and state requirements, biosolids are often applied to agricultural land and reclamation sites. Not recommended for vegetable gardens because of potential heavy metal content, pathogen levels, and salts.