

COMPOST



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.

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!

Organic waste accounts for more than a third of the material in California's waste stream. Composting your kitchen and yard trimmings helps divert that waste from the landfills, waterways, and water treatment facilities.

Why use Compost?

- Compost fights climate change.
- Compost amends both sandy and clay soils.
- Adding compost to the soil improves water infiltration and storage.
- Adding compost to the soil feeds beneficial organisms and enhances biological activity.
- You will significantly reduce the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- Compost provides a balanced, slow-release source of nutrients that helps the soil hold nutrients long enough for plants to use them.
- Home composting is a valuable tool in educating children about nature and the cycle of life.
- 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.
- Healthy plants from healthy soil look better, produce better, and have a greater ability to fight off pests and diseases.

Source: www.smcsustainability.com

How to use Compost

- As a soil amendment. It helps aerate the soil and helps sandy soil hold moisture.
- As a potting mixture, finished compost can be combined with equal parts sand and soil to create an excellent potting mix. Note, never place plants in pure compost, the high nitrogen concentrations can harm roots!
- 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 **“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.

Residents in the service area can pick up free compost year round from the Shoreway Environmental Center.

