

# How to Apply Compost

**Existing Flower Beds** - Add about 1.25 cm (1/2") of compost as a top dressing. If adding mulch, apply compost first, then cover with mulch. If last year's mulch is still in place, remove it, add a layer of compost, then re-apply the mulch. Water until the entire root zone is saturated.

**New Beds** - Add 5 cm (2") of compost and mix to at least a 30 cm (1ft) depth. Although compost is beneficial whenever it is added to soil, for the best results, add your compost about 4 weeks before planting. This will give the compost some extra time to boost the level of beneficial organisms in your soil, energizing plant growth.

**Vegetable Gardens** - Apply about 2 cm (3/4") of compost as a top dressing, either before or after planting. Again, for best results, apply the compost at least 4 weeks before planting. You can also put a bit of compost in the hole you make when you plant your seedlings.

**New Lawns** - Apply 5 cm (2") of compost and mix thoroughly and uniformly to a depth of 30 cm (1ft) before you sod or seed your lawn. Water thoroughly. As with gardens, you will get the best results if you apply the compost at least 4 weeks before seeding.

**Established Lawns** - Aerate the entire area before topdressing. Rake 1.25 cm (1/2") of compost evenly over the area. Water thoroughly. For best results, apply in early spring or fall.

**Mulching Around Trees** - Choose a coarse-textured compost to reduce weeds and provide a thick cover to the area. Blend 1 part compost to 4 parts wood chip mulch. For best results, apply in early spring or fall. Always arrange the mulch so that water flows away from the tree trunk.

**Tree Planting** - Dig a hole about 5 times the diameter of the root ball of the tree. Before planting, mix 1 part compost and 6 parts original soil and mix thoroughly outside of the hole. Place the tree in the hole and use the compost-soil mixture as backfill around the root ball. Water thoroughly. For best results, apply a compost-wood chip mixture as a mulch around the tree (see above).

## Benefits of Composting

**Composting Reduces Waste & Helps the Environment** - The more kitchen and yard waste we compost, the less waste goes into our landfills. Keeping organic waste out of landfills reduces the production of methane, which is a greenhouse gas 30 times as potent as carbon dioxide.

**Using Compost Improves Soil & Plant Health** - The application of quality compost improves the soil in our lawns and gardens in so many ways. For example, compost:

- Adds slow release macronutrients and organic matter
- Supports and enhances the soil's community of beneficial micro-organisms
- Improves drainage and aeration in dense, clay soil
- Enables light soil to retain nutrients and moisture
- Attracts earthworms and other beneficial organisms
- Enhances the soil's ability to clean the water that passes through it on the way to our streams and rivers
- Results in a darker soil colour, which better holds the sun's warmth

**Compost Quality Counts!** – All well-made compost is good for your lawn and garden soil, and composts must meet stringent government standards designed to protect human health and the environment. Some compost producers, however, go above and beyond the legal requirements: they produce composts with specific traits, which provide growers with further benefits, depending on the end use. Look for the Compost Quality Alliance logo and visit the Compost Council of Canada's website at [www.compost.org](http://www.compost.org) to find out more about this important program.

