

Fertilising with compost

In most gardens there is an overabundance of nitrogen and phosphate. Adding compost can help restore the nutrient balance in the garden. But even with compost, it is possible to misuse fertilisers in your garden.

For this reason, you need to know whether your compost is rich in nutrients.

Rich in nutrients	Lower in nutrients
Kitchen waste	Garden waste
Foliage and green parts of plants	Woody parts, open compost heaps or compost silos (leaching)
Compost 4 to 6 months old	Ripe compost

Benefits of compost:

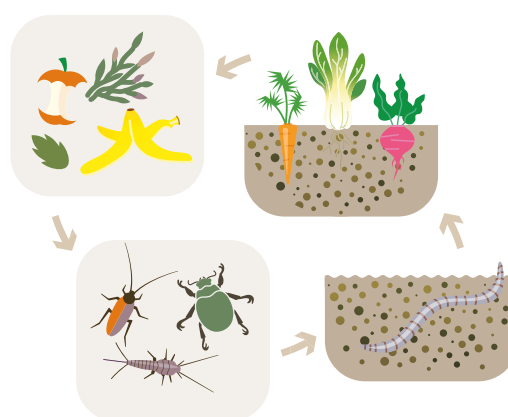
- Garden and kitchen waste can be immediately transformed into nutrient-rich humus.
- Organic elements loosen the soil and help it store water and nutrients.
- Microorganisms, fungi, amoebae, springtails, beetles and earthworms provide the nutrients that plants can absorb through their roots.
- Complete and balanced fertiliser.
- Inexpensive soil improver.
- Animals such as hedgehogs, shrews and slow worms can also use a compost heap as a food source.
- Easily available fertiliser without long transport distances or complicated packaging.

It's all about good composting – whether a compost heap produces pleasant-smelling, nutrient-rich soil or stinking sludge – it all comes down to the gardener.

NB: Meat, fish and dairy products can all attract unwanted guests such as rats and foxes.



Amélioration du sol



What can be composted?

Yes	No
Coarse, woody material cut into small pieces with garden shears or shredder	
Thin cardboard, pieces of paper and crumpled newspaper	Coloured or glossy paper
Pigeon droppings	Dog and cat droppings
Tea bags, coffee grounds	Meat, fish and dairy products
Vacuum cleaner bag contents	
Wood ash	Coal ash
	Diseased plants
	Lots of lemon peel

When?

It is best to start in autumn by spreading fresh compost on the beds as a mulch layer and "mixing" it into the soil before planting (4 to 6 weeks before), without fully incorporating it. Layers up to 5 cm thick are sufficient. Allow 6 to 10 kg per m² (10-litre bucket = 7 kg).

Do not place perennial weeds directly on the compost; let the weeds decompose for three weeks in a covered bucket filled with water, then pour the entire mixture over the compost: nutrients are preserved while stopping weeds from spreading.

Installing a compost heap

The right place:

- On bare earth, as many living organisms live in the soil (exception: composter for balcony and terrace).
- Sheltered from strong winds and not too exposed to the sun.
- The positioning of the compost heap must meet its heat requirements.
- Easily accessible from the kitchen and garden.

The **size** of the compost heap depends on the size of the garden. In any case, about 1 m² is needed to obtain the optimal temperature of at least 60°C to 65°C required for the waste to decompose. By breaking down organic tissue, microorganisms generate heat. This heat is needed to kill weed seeds and pathogens, and to beneficially transform organic tissue.

It does not matter whether your compost is made of wooden planks, bricks or plastic – what matters is that it lets in air on the sides.

To keep it from getting soaked in the rain, to protect it from the cold and to store heat, it is best to cover it with a tarpaulin.

Compost needs moisture

- Too dry: decomposition is impeded.
- Too moist / not enough air: anaerobic conditions with methane production.

Design:

- Prevent water retention with a 10 cm layer of sand.
- Insert woody branches cut into small pieces for aeration and drainage.
- Attract microorganisms with a bucket full of ripe or half-decomposed compost.
- Deposit waste in layers, no higher than 15 to 25 cm.
- Never make compost with just one ingredient.
- Mix at least once every six weeks.

Composting and applying liquid or solid manure are all good eco-friendly options, but not all gardens are suited to this. Before going ahead, you must be sure that the smell of these substances and the visual appearance of their containers will not bother your neighbours. Keep this in mind when planning your garden!

Wormery

If you do not have a garden, you can also install a wormery on your balcony or terrace to save space. Kitchen waste can be transformed into worm humus and then used as fertiliser for balcony plants.

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