

How to Use Compost

**Justen Garrity
Veteran Compost**

Benefits of compost

Promotes soil health

- Supplies organic matter to soil
- Attracts earthworms
- Stimulates beneficial soil microorganisms
- Increases soil water holding capacity
- Increases soil nutrient retention



Benefits of compost

Promotes soil health

- **Improves soil tilth and friability**
- **Improves soil drainage**
- **Loosens heavy clay soils**
- **Suppresses soil-borne plant pathogens (diseases)**

Benefits of compost

Plant nutrients

Compost is not a fertilizer, but does contain plant nutrients

- Nitrogen and phosphorus are mostly in organic forms
 - Released slowly to plants
 - Not readily leached from the topsoil
- Compost contains over 40 trace nutrients that are essential for plant growth



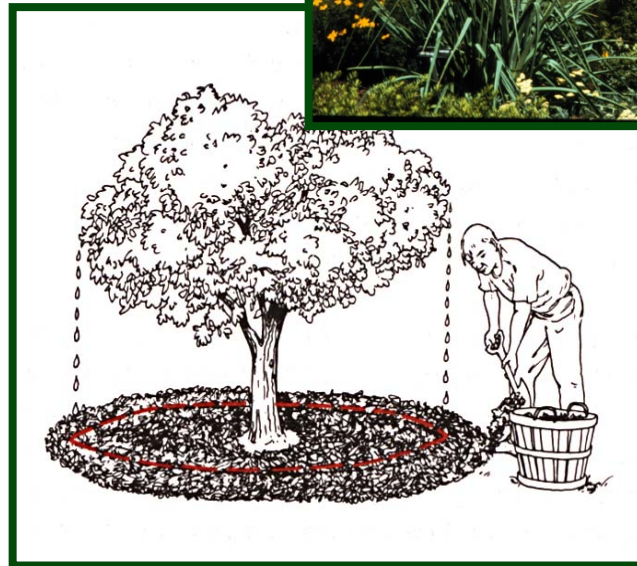
Using finished compost

- Soil amendment

- Be sure that compost is mature, has an earthy smell (no ammonia or rotten smell), looks dark and crumbly with no recognizable feedstock
- Compost improves soil health when mixed in the top 4 to 6 inches
- Will improve water and nutrient retention of sandy soils
- Will loosen compacted clay soils and make them more friable

Using finished compost

- Surface mulch in the garden/landscape
 - Maximum 3” depth
 - Start 3-4” from trunk
 - Extend out to dripline
- Mulch provides
 - Protection from temp extremes
 - Slows moisture loss from soil
 - Provides some slow release nutrients



Using finished compost

- Lawn topdressing

- Be sure compost is very mature to avoid harming the lawn
- Use fine (screened) compost, ¼” depth raked over lawn
- Best if lawn is cored before applying compost
- Retains moisture, supplies slow release nutrients, prevents soil compaction

- Potting mix

- Compost must be very mature to avoid injury to plants
- Use fine textured compost (screened through ¼ inch hardware cloth)
- Mix no more than 1/2 compost by volume