

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO HEALTHY FERTILIZER & COMPOSTING



Why does soil matter?

- Healthy soil is living—it contains beneficial microbes, fungi, and organic matter that help plants absorb nutrients.
- Soil-grown plants develop deeper roots, making them more resilient and nutrient-dense.
- Microbe-rich soil breaks down organic matter and provides plants with a steady flow of nutrients.
- Chemical-heavy soils lack beneficial microbes and organic matter, which makes it harder for plants to absorb nutrients.



How can I tell if my soil needs fertilizer?

Weak, yellow, or stunted plants may indicate nutrient deficiencies. A soil test can confirm what's missing.



Organic vs. synthetic fertilizers—what's the difference?

- Organic fertilizers such as compost, manure, and bone meal improve soil health by feeding microbes and enriching soil structure.
- Synthetic fertilizers provide quick nutrients but can degrade long-term soil quality by disrupting microbial balance.



Is compost a good fertilizer?

Yes! Compost enriches soil with microbes and nutrients, improves structure, and supports healthy plant growth.



Are store-bought fertilizers safe for organic gardening?

Yes, you can use store-bought fertilizers if they are certified organic and made from natural materials like fish or bone meal. Always check the labels to ensure they meet organic standards and are free from synthetic additives.



Where to find quality fertilizer

- Local nurseries and garden centers offer organic and region-specific fertilizers, compost, manure, and organic soil.
- Make your own compost with kitchen scraps, yard waste, and worm castings to create a rich, free source of nutrients.



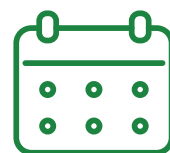
Do I need fertilizer if I use compost?

Compost provides nutrients, but heavy feeders like tomatoes may require extra organic fertilizer.



How often should I fertilize?

Add a new layer of compost every few weeks and apply fertilizer every 4 to 6 weeks during the growing season. Avoid over-fertilizing as it can burn roots and cause soil imbalances.



What's the best way to apply fertilizer?

Granular fertilizers should be mixed into soil, while liquids should be applied at the plant base.



Composting and growing quick tips

How to build a compost pile:

- Select a location with good drainage
- Add kitchen scraps: fruits, vegetables, coffee grounds, tea bags, egg shells
- Mix in yard waste: grass cuttings, leaves, straw, shredded cardboard
- Balance scraps and yard waste
- Don't add meat, dairy, or greasy food
- You can compost young weeds, not seeds
- Turn compost weekly for aeration
- Avoid compost getting wet
- Store in a dry, cool, ventilated space



Did you know? Adding worm castings to compost boosts nutrients, enhances microbes, and improves soil structure for healthier plants.



Compost readiness check

Ready:

Dark
Crumbly
Smells earthy

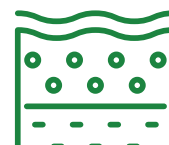


Not ready:

Chunky
Smells sour

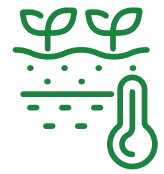


Spread compost on the soil surface and mix it into the top few inches to enhance soil structure and nutrients. For raised beds or containers, blend it directly with potting soil.



Microbes at work

- Composting generates heat as microbes break down organic matter.
- Temperatures between 130–160°F (54–70°C) are optimal for decomposition.



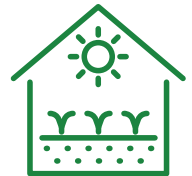
Composting in small spaces

- Indoor: Use a small worm bin (vermicomposting)
- Balcony: Use a compact compost tumbler for easy maintenance



Indoor plant growing tips

- Place plants in bright windows or use LED grow lights
- Use well-draining potting mix with compost
- Good ventilation prevents mold and pests



Natural pest control for veggies

- Use neem oil or beneficial insects like ladybugs or predatory mites
- Install row covers to block pests
- Keep plants healthy and nourished for natural resistance



Get more tips for growing healthy food [here](#).