

Cheap Ways to Improve Garden Soil

Soil is the heart of your garden. And if we want to keep our gardens healthy and producing plenty, it's essential to care for the soil diligently. Here are some practical and cheap ways to improve garden soil.

Fertilizer

When people think of improving soil, they most often think of adding fertilizer. This is because plants pull nutrients out of the soil, so we must put them back. There are 2 ways to add fertilizer: organic matter and inorganic fertilizers.

Organic Matter

Adding organic matter means adding products from living things into your soil. Some common ways of doing this include adding compost, manure, blood/bone meal, or [seaweed-based fertilizer](#).

Inorganic Fertilizers

You can also use inorganic products. You can buy these at any gardening store. And they come in all kinds of varieties, like succulent, for encouraging blooms, fruits, or houseplants.

Soil Amendments

Nutrients are just 1 facet of keeping soil healthy. Paying attention to several soil characteristics like pH and permeability/drainage is essential.

Soil pH

Soil pH is a measure of the soil's acidity. For example, you need acid soil to grow blueberries, corn, cucumbers, and onions.

How to Lower Soil pH

The easiest way to lower soil pH is to add sulfur, which you can find at garden supply stores. How much sulfur you need is determined by how much you need to lower the pH, so it's a good idea to start with a pH test. Then you work it evenly into the soil according to the package directions. Be sure to wear protective gear as indicated. Be sure to give a 1 month's break between adding sulfur and planting. If you do not, you will burn the roots of your plants.

How to Raise Soil pH

Adding agricultural lime, or simply lime is the go-to way to raise soil pH. Lime is ground-up limestone. Like lowering the pH, you need to start with a soil test to add the proper amount of lime. Then work it into the soil until evenly distributed. Allow at least 2 months, ideally 3, between treatment and planting to ensure enough time for the lime to neutralize the acid.

Permeability

The rate at which water moves through the soil is an integral part of growing healthy gardens. If water moves too fast, it may not be absorbed by the plant and leech nutrients away. If it drains too slowly, it can cause root rot and encourage fungal growth.

Improving Permeability

There are several cheap ways of improving the permeability of

your soil.

Sand

Sand is a cheap way to make soil drain. How much and how fine the sand needs to be depends on what your soil is composed of.

Manure

You can aged manure to increase your soil's permeability.

Mulch

An excellent way to prevent water loss from the soil is to keep the soil mulched. It will also make the soil cooler and prevent weeds from growing.

Conclusion

Growing delicious food starts with caring for your soil. So what do you add to it?