



Consumer Compost Use Program - Flower & Vegetable Garden Class Establishment & Maintenance

Description

The US Composting Council has developed the Consumer Compost Use Program to provide the consumer with an easy to use guide for compost application in the home garden and landscape. Use of this product meets the acceptable parameter range for home garden use (flowers, vegetables and fruit). Look for the Consumer Compost Use Program icons for other applications of compost use. For more information please go to www.compostingcouncil.org

Soil Analysis: A soil analysis should be completed by a reputable laboratory to determine any nutritional requirements, pH, and organic matter adjustments that may be necessary. Once these are determined, the soil can be appropriately amended to a range suitable for the particular plants being established. A list of state agricultural cooperative extension labs can be found at: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/index.html>

Compost Parameters for Flower & Vegetable Garden Use

Parameter	Unit	Range		Notes
		Preferred	Acceptable	
Stability	mg CO ₂ -C per g OM per day	<2	<4	The lower the number, the more completely composted the product.
Maturity	% seed emergence & vigor	90 -100	80-100	The higher the percentage, the more versatile the product.
Moisture Content	% wet weight basis	40-50%	35-65%	Products with higher moisture contents may be used. They may simply be more difficult to apply.
Organic Matter Content	% dry weight basis	35-60%	25-65%	Creating a soil containing 5% - 10% organic matter is desirable in typical, well drained soils.
Particle Size	Screen size to pass through	3/8"	1/2"	Planting compost should be finely (3/8" – 1/2") screened, whereas coarsely screened compost (1"-2") should be used in mulching.
pH	pH units	6.0-7.5	5.5 – 8.5	Modify soil pH with lime, etc., if necessary, based on soil testing results.
Soluble Salts (Electrical Conductivity)	dS/m (mmhos/cm) dry weight basis	Maximum of 5	Maximum of 15	Keep in mind that most soluble salts are also plant nutrients. Compost containing a higher soluble salt content should be applied at lower application rates, and 'watered in' well.
Physical Contaminants*	% dry weight basis	<0.5%	<1%	Small stones may be deemed more acceptable than man-made inerts (e.g., plastic).

*All federal and state standards related to biological and chemical contamination must also be met.

Applications

Establishment: Compost should be uniformly applied over the entire area at an average depth of 1-2 inches and then incorporated to a depth of 6-8 inches using a rotary tiller or other similar equipment. Higher application rates of compost may be used if the compost is incorporated to a greater depth. Rake the soil surface smooth prior to seeding or planting. The soil surface should be free of large clods, roots, stones, and other material that will interfere with planting. The amended area should be watered thoroughly after planting.

Lower compost application rates may be necessary for salt sensitive crops (e.g., strawberries), or where composts possessing higher salt and nutrient levels are used, while higher application rates may be used for plants that require greater amounts of fertility (e.g., tomatoes).

Maintenance: Apply a coarser compost mulch (1" – 2" screened) over the garden bed to conserve moisture, for weed suppression and/or for aesthetic purposes. **Note:** *The nutrients contained in compost should be considered when applying fertilization. They will typically offset plant nutrient requirements, thereby potentially reducing fertilizer application rates.*

Disclaimer: The USCC makes no warranties regarding this product or its contents, quality, or suitability for any particular use. Please refer to the individual producer's product label for specific use instructions.