



# THE REAL DIRT ABOUT SOIL

**THE SUCCESS OF YOUR GARDEN** depends on having healthy garden soil. Think of soil as a living community rather than an inert pile of dirt. Plants need the chemicals and minerals in the soil but those elements are not in a form that plants can utilize. This is where soil organisms come in. Beneficial bacteria, fungi, nematodes and other organisms in the soil convert nutrients into a form plants can use. Here are some basics on how to take care of the living community that is your soil.



## ORGANIC MATERIAL

Since plants are full of the good stuff they take up from the soil, composted plants are a great thing to add back to the soil. Add compost each season to replenish what the living plants have removed.



## MULCH

Covering bare soil helps regulate the temperature and reduce moisture loss. Wood chips do a great job and will eventually break down to help the soil. When this happens, add more mulch.



## COMPACTION AND DISTURBANCE

Gardens, by their nature, get disturbed. Planting seeds, weeding, and transplanting all disturb the soil to some extent. However, turning the soil over disturbs the balance of moisture and air and changes the structure of the soil. This takes time to rebalance. Minimizing the disturbance helps quicken the healing. Disturb only as much as you need to.

***Let the microscopic community in your garden soil do what it does best and you will be rewarded with beautiful, healthy plants.***



## CHEMICALS

Your first line of defense against insect and fungal pests is strong, healthy plants. Using pesticides, even pesticides developed to address specific targets, will disrupt the balance of organisms in the soil. When the need to deal with pests arises always choose the safest and mildest option. Even synthetic fertilizers can be disruptive. An organic fertilizer is a milder and just as effective option.



## MOISTURE

Even, adequate moisture in the soil gets the best results. Mulching and minimizing soil disturbance help regulate the soil moisture. Avoid working saturated soils as it destroys the needed air passages. Water as needed but do not over water.

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