Benefits of Compost

Compost creates a strong environment for healthy plants and landscaping to thrive while preventing weed growth. The benefits of compost are vast and range from improving water retention to neutralizing pH levels. In addition to making soil easier to work with, here is a list of the top 10 reasons to use compost for your landscaping projects:

1. Contains all of the essential nutrients for a plant, including macro and micronutrients usually absent in synthetic fertilizers.
2. Releases nutrients slowly over months or years, unlike synthetic fertilizers that need to be applied repeatedly to receive the equivalent nutrient value.
3. Contains humus proteins, which binds soil particles together. This helps the soil to resist compacting and increases its ability to hold moisture and nutrients.
4. Compost buffers the soil pH levels, neutralizing acid and alkaline soils, bringing the levels to the optimum range for plant nutrients.
5. Enhances moisture and nutrient retention in sandy soil, while promoting drainage and aeration in clay soil.
6. Improves the Cation-Exchange Capacity (CEC) of soil, increasing the soil's ability to hold nutrients for plants.
7. Only a 5% increase in organic material quadruples soil's water holding capacity.
8. Compost can hold nutrients tight enough to prevent them from washing out, but loosely enough so plants can take them up as needed.
9. Improves the ability to carry oxygen to the plant's roots.
10. The environment is positively impacted by using locally sourced yard trimmings.

How To Apply Compost

Apply compost uniformly on the garden area at a depth of 1-2 inches and then incorporate into the soil to a depth of 6-8 inches. Rake the soil surface smooth and remove large debris prior to planting. Low compost application rates may be necessary to salt sensitive crops (strawberries) or a higher rate for plants that require a higher rate of fertility (tomatoes). *Note: The added nutrients in compost should offset the fertilizer application rates.*

What is in the City's compost?

Richland Compost begins with trimmings from landscaping that are brought to the Richland Landfill. The trimmings are put through a grinder and then taken to a designated area for composting at the landfill to be mixed with biosolids from Richland's Wastewater Treatment Facility. The process involves curing the mixture, per State Regulations, to ensure the compost is free of any pathogens and other contaminants.

RICHLAND COMPOST
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Directions for use of RICHLAND COMPOST

1. **Landscaping Mulch**: Evenly apply compost at a rate of no greater than 2 inches of depth. Compost can be spread from a wheel barrow. Apply compost around the base of trees, shrubs, and other plants, avoiding placing mulch against the plant's trunk or stem. Smooth and further distribute compost with a rake or by hand to create a solid mulch layer.

2. **Backfill Mix**: Apply compost at an inclusion rate (ratio) or 25% to 33% when blending with native soil when planting trees and shrubs. Dig a hole slightly shallower than the root ball and two to four times its width. Apply the fully blended compost and native soil around the root ball, tamping and watering around the root ball to firm up the plant.

3. **Turf Establishment**: Evenly apply compost at a rate of 1 to 2 inches. Incorporate the compost to a depth of 5 to 7 inches using a rototiller or disc until the compost is evenly mixed with an inclusion rate of 20 to 30% by volume. Rake or drag to smooth the soil surface. A starter fertilizer application may be necessary. Apply seed and water.

4. **Upgrading Marginal Soils**: Evenly apply compost at a rate of 1 to 3 inches. Incorporate the compost to a depth of approximately 6 inches using a rototiller, plow, or disc until the compost is evenly mixed with an inclusion rate of 20 to 50% volume. Rake or drag to smooth the soil surface. A starter fertilizer application may be necessary. Apply see, or plant trees or shrubs based on the intended use of the soil. Water as necessary to assure proper crop establishment.

5. **Soil Mulch for Erosion Control**: Apply a 3 to 4 inch layer of compost over the sloped soil surface including over the top of the slope. The varied size of the compost material will produce a stable mat with good water holding capacity for the sloped areas. Slightly wet, and tamp or roll the compost to increase the holding capacity of the compost on the slope to the existing native soil. If a more stable slope is desired, cover the slope with seed, and water as necessary to establish vegetation. If not actively vegetated, natural re vegetation will also occur over time.

The Richland Compost is currently available for residential sales at Beaver Bark, McDonald Quality Topsoil & Excavation,
Wood's Nursery, and
Redigarden, Mobile Farm Services.

For more information visit:
ci.Richland.wa.us

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