



## SOIL AMENDMENTS

MATERIAL	THICKNESS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	COMMENTS
Bagged Steer Manure		Low grade fertilizer.	Cost may be a problem in large quantities.	Nutrient holding ability good.
Compost	1-2 inches	Good feeding mulch; partially decomposed compost will decompose quickly into humus.	Must have had sufficient heating period to kill weed seeds, bacteria, or disease.	Plan and start ahead so compost will be ready when you need it.
Grass Clippings	2-3 inches	Improves soil by adding organic matter; readily available almost everywhere.	Absorbent, may carry weed seeds.	May be mixed with other materials to prevent packing down; dry for a few days after cutting, <u>don't use clippings from lawns treated with herbicides.</u>
Leaves	2-3 inches	Readily available to most people; contain many trace minerals; best food for earthworms.	May become soggy and packed down, making it difficult for water to penetrate into soil.	Chipping or mixing with other materials will prevent packing down, matting; best to compost before using or may inhibit seed germination.
Peat moss	1-2 inches	Clean and free of weed seeds.	Extremely absorbent so water will not readily penetrate to soil; can be expensive; adds little or no nutrients to soil.	Very good soil conditioner to loosen up heavy soil and improve water retention; acidic; long decomposition time.

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Perlite		Light, sterile and causes good aeration.	Floats to top of seedbed when watered.	Volcanic glass; does not absorb water but will hold water in microscopic cracks. Does not hold nutrients. Good in potting soil to germinate seeds.
Pine needles	3-4 inches	Light, usually free of weed seeds; absorbs little or no moisture; can be reused; does not pack down.	Decomposes very slowly.	Add extra nitrogen fertilizer and shred for faster decomposition; <u>slightly</u> acidic.
Sawdust	2-3 inches	Readily available from lumberyard or workshop.	Takes very long to decompose unless weathered or aged outdoors first; water penetration only fair; may encourage crown rot in some plants by holding moisture against stem.	Add extra nitrogen to speed decomposition; hardwood sawdust rots faster than pine or cedar, especially if weathered or aged outdoors first. Best used in the fall.
Straw	6-8 inches	Readily available in some areas.	Can be difficult to handle; can be fire hazard.	Chop to make more attractive and easier to handle; add extra nitrogen to aid decomposition unless straw is weathered or aged outdoors.
Vermiculite		High air and water holding capacity for long periods of time. Light, sterile, neutral pH provides good aeration.		Contains high percentage of magnesium and potassium necessary for good root growth.