TIPS FOR SUCCESSFULLY GARDENING IN UTAH

BETTER GARDEN SOIL & GARDEN PREP

Preparing a garden for planting seeds may seem like a simple task, but there’s actually a lot to consider. The most important part of preparing a garden starts with the soil. Before you play in the dirt, here’s our tips for growing successfully in Utah soils.

MIX IN COMPOST

Adding an organic material, like compost, to the soil is very important. The composted material will add pockets in the soil for air and water. These are essentials the plants need to thrive. It’s important that the compost you choose is fully composted. If it still smells strongly, that’s an indicator that there’s a lot of extra nitrogen that hasn’t broken down yet. This, along with putting down mulch, can burn the plants.

Nick Loveland, Certified Arborist and Assistant Manager at Ogden IFA Country Store, recommends Oakdell Egg Farms Organic Compost. Oakdell’s product is a premium organic chicken manure compost, produced locally. And, since it’s a chicken compost, it doesn’t contain the extra salt found in steer manure.
Adding compost is the most essential step for our Utah soil. Because so much of it contains clay, it’s more difficult for plants to grow. By doing this simple step, the soil will become more livable for the plants.

**TILL THE SOIL**

When you’re adding compost to your soil, it’s best to use a tiller that can get deeper than three or four inches. In fact, the ideal depth for tilling is six to eight inches. Tilling a few extra inches into the ground allows the roots to get a firmer grip in the soil and helps to give them more access to water and nutrients.

**FERTILIZE TO JUMPSTART GROWTH**

It’s important to fertilize your garden soil. Incorporate it into the soil before or while you’re planting seeds and plants. “A lot of our experienced gardeners use our 16-16-8 Garden Blend Fertilizer, spread it over their gardens and till it in,” says Loveland. “Then they’ll start planting.” Fertilizing your garden before planting seeds allows the phosphorous, potassium, and nitrogen to really penetrate the soil, so the roots start to use it quickly.

All soils are not the same. In fact, the soil in Utah and the Intermountain West is extremely salty. Because of the high salt content in our soil, compost often isn’t enough to keep plants healthy. That’s why many of our gardeners add a product called Bountiful Earth Humate to their gardens. It reduces salt and aids microorganism activity in the soil. And, because it’s decomposed green organic matter, Humate helps retain water and lower the alkalinity of the soil, which is important because the water we use for our gardens has a high alkaline pH.

Something important to note is that the above steps are for creating great soil in the spring when you’re ready to plant. There are, however, steps that a gardener can take year round to ensure better soil. For example, in the fall, tilling compost, leaves, and grass clippings into the soil will help so the nitrogen can fully break down before spring arrives.

For more tips and tricks, visit your local IFA Country Store and talk to one of our experienced gardening associates.

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