

# Soil Prep and Compost Guide

Great gardens start with great soil. This guide combines soil prep and compost basics in one place.

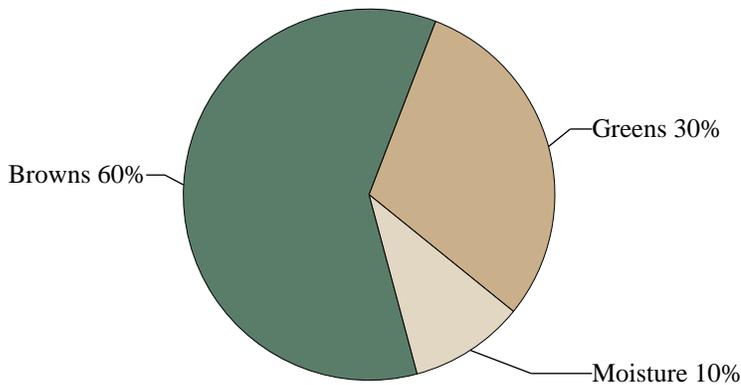
## Soil Prep Checklist

- Do a jar test to learn your texture (sand, silt, clay).
- Add 1 to 2 inches of finished compost each season.
- Avoid working soil when it is soggy - it compacts fast.
- Mulch after planting to protect soil life and moisture.

## Compost Recipe (By Volume)

Material Type	Examples	Target Share
Browns (carbon)	Leaves, straw, shredded paper	About 60%
Greens (nitrogen)	Veg scraps, grass clippings	About 30%
Moisture and air	Water, turning, air space	About 10%

## Compost Mix Visual



## Compost Readiness Test

Finished compost is dark, crumbly, and smells earthy. Original materials should be unrecognizable.

## Compost Troubleshooting

Problem	Likely Cause	Fix
Smelly pile	Too wet or too many greens	Add browns and turn
Slow breakdown	Too dry or cold	Moisten and turn
Pests	Food scraps exposed	Bury greens and cover

## Quick Fixes for Common Soil Issues

Issue	Signs	Fix
Compaction	Water pools, roots struggle	Add compost and broadfork
Low fertility	Pale leaves, slow growth	Top dress with compost
Poor drainage	Soil stays wet	Build raised beds

## Target Soil pH for Common Crops

Crop Group	Target pH Range	Notes
Leafy greens	6.0 to 7.0	Slightly neutral is fine
Tomatoes, peppers	6.0 to 6.8	Avoid very acidic soil
Potatoes	5.0 to 6.0	Lower pH helps reduce scab
Blueberries	4.5 to 5.5	Needs acidic soil mix

## Seasonal Soil Care Plan

Season	Focus
Spring	Top dress with compost and loosen compacted spots.
Summer	Mulch and avoid over-tilling to protect soil life.
Fall	Add leaves or compost, seed cover crops if possible.

## Natural Soil Boost Options

Option	Best For	Notes
Leaf mold	Moisture retention	Shred leaves and let age
Worm castings	Seedlings and transplants	Use in small amounts
Aged manure	Heavy feeders	Fully composted only

## Bed Prep Toolkit

- Broadfork or garden fork to loosen soil without over-tilling.
- Rake to level beds and break up clumps.

- Compost or leaf mold for top dressing.
- Mulch to lock in moisture once plants are in.

## Soil Care Timing Guide

Timing	What to Do	Why It Helps
Dry spring day	Loosen soil, add compost	Preps roots for quick growth
After a rain	Wait 1-2 days	Avoid compaction
Mid-season	Top dress and mulch	Steady moisture and soil life
Fall cleanup	Add leaves or compost	Feeds soil over winter

## Disclaimer

This guide is informational only. Always follow safety guidance when handling compost or soil amendments.

## Sources

Original content by Wiley Rooster Farm & Greenhouse.