



# STOP FoodWaste.ie

## Using Compost at Home

Where there are plants, there is a need for compost. Compost has so many uses, you will never run out of ways to use this black gold. In general, compost can be used as: a mulch, topdressing on lawns, soil amendment ingredient in a potting or seed mix, a way to make compost tea.



### 1. Mulch

Mulch is so important it has its own information sheet dedicated to it. Unscreened coarse compost from holding units or turning systems is a great mulch material. Put about 5-10 cm of mulch around annual plantings, trees, shrubs and on exposed slopes. This helps prevent erosion, smothers weeds, keeps the soil moist and slowly releases nutrients. In annual areas, the compost can be dug into the soil prior to planting as a soil amendment for the new season.

### 2. Topdressing

Compost is now commonly used for the maintenance of lawns and, on a larger scale, on golf courses and sports pitches. The iron in the compost is a key element as it helps give turf a healthy green look. If you are using compost on your lawn, the first thing to do is screen out the coarse bits from your mature compost. For this, use a screen with holes less than 1 cm in size. Then spread 1 cm of the fine compost on top of lawns in spring to stimulate turf growth. Raking in up to 2 cm of compost after aerating or 'plugging' your lawn also works well.

### 3. Soil Amendment for Planting

Compost improves soil structure and fertility while increasing its water and nutrient holding capacity. Mixing compost into the soil before planting improves every type of soil and makes plants grow better. Compost can be used in flowering beds, vegetable gardens, for planting trees and shrubs and in establishing new lawn areas.

- For garden beds, spread 5-10cm of screened or unscreened compost on top and dig it in 20-30cm deep.
- For trees and shrubs, mix 5-8cm of compost into the soil at the bottom of the planting hole and mix with soil to cover plant roots.
- For new lawn areas, apply 4-8cm on top of existing soil and dig it in 20-30cm deep. Compost helps both lawns starting from seed as well as lawns being established with sod.



### 4. Potting or seed starting mix

A screened (less than 1cm) and well matured compost is ideal for making potting or seed starting mixes.

**Seed starting mix:** A mixture of one half compost to one half sand is perfect for creating a seed starting mix.

**Potting mix:** A blend of one-third compost to two-thirds soil will produce an ideal potting mix.

### 5. Compost Tea

Compost tea is a great way to use your compost. To make it, put some compost into a burlap or woven plastic sack and soak it in water for several days. The compost tea is rich with micro-nutrients and full of micro-organisms that restore and reinvigorate soil life. Some even use compost tea as a spray to fight plant diseases. This 'tea' can be used to irrigate both indoor and garden plants.