

LEAF COMPOST

Leaf compost is a dark, friable, partially decomposed substance made by the microbial decomposition of fallen leaves. It serves as an organic fertilizer and soil conditioner, effectively increasing the organic content of soil. It improves soil quality, but is not, however, considered a fertilizer as it does not contain enough nutrients.

Benefits of incorporating leaf compost in your soil:

- Drought damage to plants is reduced because of an increasing water-holding capacity of the soil.
- Soil tilth is improved making the soil easier to cultivate.
- It supplies trace amounts of the 16 essential elements needed for plant growth.
- Adverse effects of excessive alkalinity, acidity, or over-fertilization are reduced by the addition of leaf compost.
- Adding compost enables the soil to hold more plant nutrients for longer periods and improves drainage.

Leaf Compost can be made at home by putting leaves in a compost bin or a mound, at least 4 ft. in diameter and 3 ft. in height, or by shredding the leaves.

Leaves on your lawn can be mowed fine with a lawnmower that shreds the leaves. The shredded leaves can be left on the lawn to decompose. Freshly shredded leaves can be used as mulch on planting beds, as well as around trees and shrubs. Leaf compost can be applied as an annual top dressing or as a soil amendment when planting or transplanting. When adding compost to soil additional nitrogen is needed. 10:10:10 is a balanced and complete fertilizer that will provide the nitrogen needed, so will blood meal or ammonium sulfate.

Information assembled by Adriana O'Sullivan, Fall 2008

Resources: http://www.copperwiki.org/index.php/Leaf_Compost

Rutgers Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet: Using Leaf Compost