

The Good Earth Farm and Garden Center
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Favorite Soil Amendments and Recipes

Goal: to develop healthy soils that persist beyond the current garden application – soils that help to maintain diversity at all levels of the living community

Straight product:

Alfalfa meal, greensand, azomite, calcitic lime, rock phosphorus, gypsum, liquid kelp, liquid humates, liquid fish, local rock dusts, leonardite, humalite or biochar.

Blended products –

- **North Country Organic's** (NCO) Pro-Gro, Pro-Start, Pro-Holly
- **Neptune's Harvest** Fish hydrolysate/kelp (not emulsion!) - especially good on begonias and all vegetables if they need a pick me up.
- **Chicken crumbles** – non-medicated chicken food that really boosts bacterial action in the soil. Organic is great if you can afford it but it's not necessary.

Favorite soil management recipes:

Basic planting mix – used in all annual and perennial installations. Rate adjusted by type and vitality of plant material and history of the garden. This is mixed together on a large tarp and stored in sealed plastic containers. I mix about 3 batches a year.

100 lbs NCO Pro Gro
100 lbs Alfalfa meal
40 lbs Azomite
40 lbs Leonardite, humalite or biochar

Woody planting mix – developed to try and get ericaceous material to settle in faster but found that it works really well for all woody material. Prep the roots for planting. Coat the root balls with the mix (work in well with fingers or knife) and work more mix into the top 6" of the soil. Also EXCELLENT for working with weak or challenged trees

50 lbs Alfalfa meal
50 lbs Jersey Greensand
40 lbs Azomite
Elemental Sulfur, Gypsum and Rock phosphate are added based on soil test results or known problems on the site.

Fall soil development mix – used in open gardens that are coming in to production, edges of existing gardens that need refreshing or other soils that need to open up (compaction etc.) It's spread on the surface at the rate of about 25-lbs/100 sq ft and either rototilled in if the bed is open or hand cultivated if the bed is already planted. Promotes a strong bacterial reaction and feeds the worms well – they develop heavy muscles (almost blue in color) that allow them to really turn soil.

100 lbs Chicken crumbles – non medicated (chicken food)
40 lbs Leonardite, humalite or biochar (stable carbon)
40 lbs Azomite
80 lbs Gypsum
100 lbs local stone dust

Caveat

Everything that I now know and work with has come from experience and the need to meet my client's expectations and my personal goal of creating healthy gardens. I provide complex, integrated and colorful gardens of all kinds to clients who love to be out in their gardens and appreciate the diversity that is found there. Over the last 35 years I have tightened down the formulas that I use as the baseline for all of the gardens I manage. It is an intensive program and definitely not for everyone – or even for most people. I have used this information in a night school program and a local gardening series for home landscapers (25 years) and have heard from people over the years that it works for them as well. They don't apply it as intensively as I do but the results still work better than anything else that they have tried.

Never forget that your best assets are your eyes and other senses – tweak these formulas so that they work for you. These formulas were worked out for the central upland area of Massachusetts – essentially North Worcester County – and would need considerable adjustment for other distinctly different geographies and soil types. Use soil tests, compaction tests, visual and textural tests and any other source of information you can find to help you unwind the history and the reality of any given soil situation.

Here's to growing great gardens!