



HOME & GARDEN

HOME AND GARDEN INFORMATION CENTER • 12005 HOMEWOOD ROAD • ELLICOTT CITY, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

Soil, Fertilizer, Mulch, and Compost Tips - January 2009

Soil

- This is a good time to have your soil tested. (link to website on soil testing) Soil test results and recommendations are very important for proper nutrient management of lawns, flowers, vegetables and landscape plants.

Fertilizer

- Keep stored dry fertilizers sealed up in your shed or basement to keep moisture out.
- Do not attempt to melt ice this winter with granular garden fertilizers. They are very corrosive to concrete and metal, and contribute to waterway pollution. Look for deicing materials containing magnesium chloride. Other formulas containing sodium chloride, potassium chloride and calcium chloride are also suitable but can be corrosive and burn plants if not applied correctly. Avoid all products containing urea because of its potential to contaminate watersheds and its corrosiveness. It's very important to keep all ice melting materials away from landscape plants. Builder's also known as "all purpose" sand is very good to use to improve traction on slippery surfaces.

Mulch

- If you have not mulched your garden yet, apply mulch now to perennial beds, trees and shrubs with fallen leaves. This will help to protect plant crowns and shallow root systems from severe cold weather. Typically our coldest weather is yet to come in February so there is still time to help your plants with mulch.

Compost

- Although it is winter your compost pile microbes are still active, although greatly reduced, and so you can continue to add to it even during cold weather. When adding to your compost pile, keep large sticks, roots and woody stems out of your compost pile. They take too long to breakdown and make it difficult to turn the ingredients. Consider placing a tarp or lid over your pile to prevent water logging and nutrient leaching over the winter.

**Have a pest or gardening question? Call The Home and Garden Information Center
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