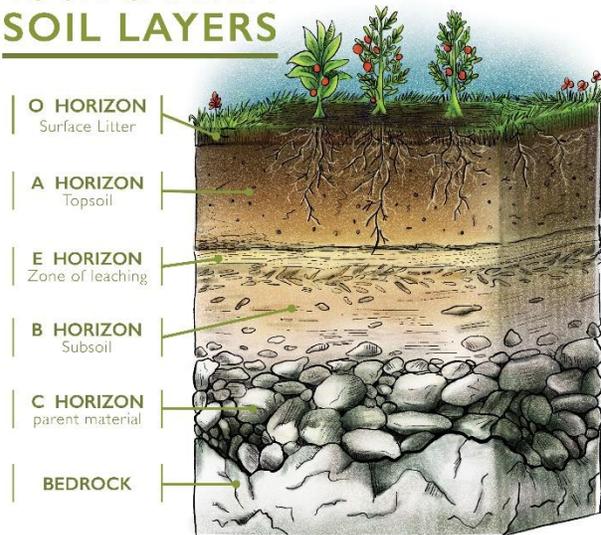




BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM

HOW TO GARDEN WITH SOIL, COMPOST, & MANURE

YOUR GARDEN SOIL LAYERS



Let's first talk about what soil, compost, and manure are. All three of these make up the organic material that plants need to grow. Whether those plants are naturally occurring or vegetables in your garden, they all need soil, compost, and manure to grow.

Soil is the layer of earth where plants grow. It's made of organic materials, clay, and rocks. There are three main types of soil: clay, sandy, and loamy. Soil with a lot of clay in it tends to be heavy, wet, and difficult to grow in. Sandy soils are very dry, low in nutrients, and drain easily. Loamy soil is

a mixture of sand, silt, and clay. Loamy soils are fertile, easy to work with, and full of nutrients. The best way to learn what type of soil you have in your yard is to test it. Check out the soil test diagram at the bottom of this document!

Compost is decaying organic material like food scraps and yard waste. It's used to fertilize the soil where plants are being grown. Compost is rich in nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. It also helps regulate the soil pH, improves the soil texture, controls moisture, and encourages healthy microbial growth.

At Billings Farm, we have plenty of manure thanks to our herd of Jersey cows. Cow manure isn't the only animal manure that can be used for gardening. Chicken manure is one of the best for growing vegetables but it should be composted before using to break down some powerful nutrients. When nitrogen content is too high in manure it can burn the plants it's spread around. Sheep manure is low in nitrogen which means it doesn't need to be composted before using.

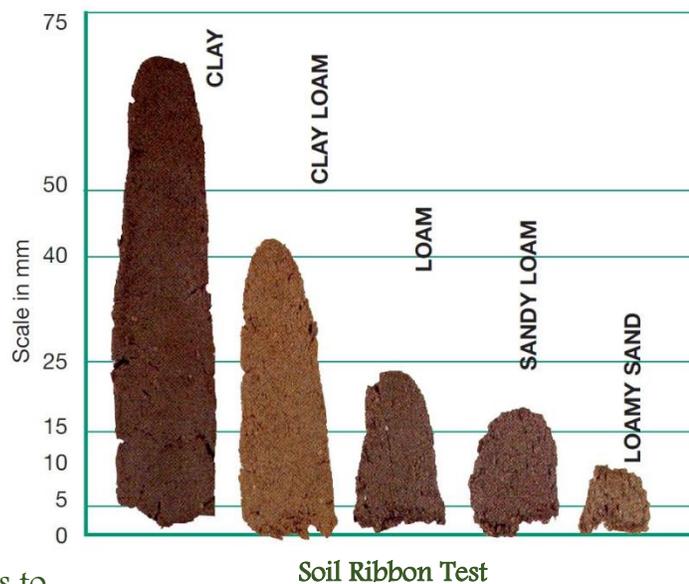


Billings Farm Jersey Cows

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Before you start amending your backyard garden soil, it's important to know what it is. Take the soil test to get started! Once you know what type of soil you have you can start adding to it.

Compost can be used in a few ways. You can add your compost right on top of your garden beds and rake it in or spread it on top of tree beds. For indoor plants, you can mix compost with top soil to give plants a boost of nutrients. This is a great way to add some texture and nutrients to your soil if you have sandy or clay soil.



Dark Rich Garden Soil

Make sure to compost your manure before using it on your garden if necessary. Manure can be added onto the top of your garden bed soil where rain water will slowly percolate and bring nutrients from the manure lower into the soil. Manure should be added 3-4 months before you plan on planting. Adding manure can improve sandy soils that tend to lose more nutrients due to run-off.

GARDEN TIP: IF YOU'RE STARTING A NEW GARDEN BED, ADD 3-4 INCHES OF COMPOST TO THE TOP OF THE BED AND RAKE IT IN. IDEALLY, REACHING 6-8 INCHES DEEP WITH THE COMPOST WILL HELP YOUR PLANTS THE MOST!

SOIL TYPE TEST

