

# Frequently Asked Questions



## What is compost?



COMPOST: /noun/ a nutrient rich soil amendment used to increase soil fertility and moisture holding capacity.



COMPOST: /verb/ process in which organic materials are mixed together in specific proportions designed to achieve desired conditions for healthy decomposition.

Composting is a biological control mechanism used to manage organic waste through a controlled process that generates a beneficial by-product. Compost produced from the composting process helps improve soil structure, suppress plant diseases and increase nutrient absorption among plant roots.

## What is the difference between organic material and organic matter?

Organic Material:  
anything that was once alive; products made from plants or animals.



Organic Matter:  
The decomposed remains of substances in the soil that were once alive.



## How does compost work?

During the composting process, naturally occurring microorganisms utilize various nutrients to break down complex carbon chains into smaller molecules, water, and energy. Some of the carbon consumed by the microbes is respired as CO<sub>2</sub> and some is used to fuel further decomposition of organic material. Energy is released as heat and the rising temperature resulting from microbial activity supports different hosts of microorganisms to populate the compost pile and provided further decomposition while killing pathogens and unwanted pests.

## Why should I use compost in my garden?

There are billions of soil dwelling microscopic organisms living in just one handful of healthy compost. Microbes in the soil help support healthy plant functions like nutrient cycling, growth and reproduction. By incorporating compost into the soil, we are adding organic matter and beneficial bacteria and fungi to the plant root zone. Beneficial microbes improve a plant's access to essential nutrients and its resistance to pests and disease.