

Building Healthy Soil

The long-term foundation under everything else you grow

DIFFICULTY Moderate
TYPE Ongoing practice

TIME Ongoing, improvements compound over seasons



DIFFICULTY
Moderate



TIME
Ongoing



COST
Low-moderate



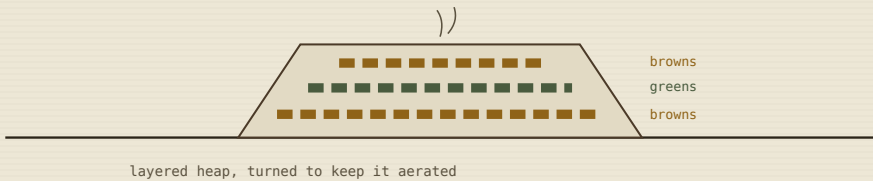
BEST SEASON
Year-round



FREQUENCY
Every season

01 Feed the soil, not just the plant

Healthy soil holds moisture and nutrients, drains well, and supports a living community of microbes and fungi — building it is less about a single fix and more about consistent, compounding inputs over time.



02 What you'll need

- Compost or aged manure
- Mulch
- A soil test kit (optional but useful for identifying gaps)
- Cover crops or green manures for resting beds

03 Method

1. Test or observe your soil — texture, drainage, and what grows well (or poorly) tells you a lot.
2. Add organic matter regularly via compost, aged manure, and mulch.
3. Avoid unnecessary digging or tilling, which disrupts soil structure and microbial life.
4. Keep soil covered — by mulch, plants, or a cover crop — rather than bare, whenever possible.
5. Rotate crops and vary plant families to avoid depleting the same nutrients repeatedly in one spot.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Soil still poor after adding compost** — may need longer, or a specific deficiency; consider a soil test for targeted correction.
- **Compacted, hard soil** — avoid working wet soil; add organic matter and consider a season of deep-rooted cover crops to open it up.
- **Waterlogged beds** — improve drainage structurally (raised beds, added coarse organic matter) rather than just adding more compost.
- **Nutrient imbalance** — a soil test is the most reliable way to identify and correct a specific deficiency or excess.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	An ongoing, year-round practice rather than a single seasonal task.
DURATION	Meaningful improvement is often visible within a year, with further compounding benefit over several years.
MAINTENANCE	Regular organic matter additions each season, plus attentive observation of how plants are performing.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Soil that's dark, crumbly, holds together loosely when squeezed, drains well, and is full of visible worm activity.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Hot Composting

Green Manures & Cover Crops

No-Dig Gardening

COMMON MISTAKES

Expecting a single compost application to fix years of depletion

Tilling or digging more than necessary, disrupting soil structure

PRO TIP

Earthworm activity is one of the best free indicators of soil health — more worms generally means healthier, more biologically active soil.