

Session 3 Food Friendly Yard Winter Email Gardening Course: Soil

The earth beneath our feet is a complex, precious, living material that has often been squandered and unappreciated. It is the key to everything we eat and is essential to our health and well-being. Research now shows that contact with healthy soil can have a positive effect on our immune systems and mental health. Healthy soil absorbs and retains water making our properties resistant to drought. It supports greater diversity of life and improves air quality. Each yard with improved soil quality becomes a patch in a quilt of healthy landscape spreading across our community. So even if we never grow one tomato, spending time caring for the soil is worthwhile.

But, of course, we do want to grow tomatoes and lots of other things, so how do we go about improving our soil and preparing it to grow the things we need? Permaculture Principles #5 and #6 teach us to *Preserve and value renewable resources and produce no waste*. Leaves, twigs, branches and garden cuttings are all valuable materials we need to keep on our properties and use to replenish soil nutrients. Composting vegetable food scraps, egg shells, and coffee grounds creates rich compost that can be used to amend the soil. All of this organic matter is the food soil needs to feed itself and ultimately to feed us.

This week's videos address the subject of Soil Status in general and provide ideas for building soil fertility. The first video is a short animated film about the importance of preserving soils. The second film teaches how plants use nutrients in the soil. Understanding this makes it easier to make good decisions about gardening practices. Beginning composting is the third video. The fourth video shows how to apply and use natural materials to improve soil quality and the fifth suggests free and local sources for improving soil fertility. You may want to do a soil test before you begin. UNH provides soil testing and the last video explains how to do this and send it to be analyzed. This testing is especially important to ensure that your soil is free of lead.

Also included this week are several articles: [The Health Benefits of Getting Dirty](#) and [Building Fertile Soil](#).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diY1ibbmiGk>
Animated film about the importance of soil health

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ugaL6wsXME>
How plants use nutrients in the soil

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voEdA-zTFk>
Beginning Composting

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jh3H2d_WFTE Soil building with natural materials.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhFWoqak4ul&list=PLApXYvbprElwCOe5gdtcOMiEMGRpUBb4e> Free and local sources for soil fertility.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPxYTLNNMT4>

UNH soil test

Articles

The Health Benefits of Getting Dirty

<https://learn.eartheasy.com/articles/the-health-benefits-of-getting-dirty/>

Building Fertile Soil

<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/building-fertile-soil-zmaz03jjzgoe>