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# Preparing and Fertilizing Garden Soil

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OREGON STATE COLLEGE / CORVALLIS

Cooperative Extension work in Agriculture and Home Economics,  
F. E. Price, director. Oregon State College and the United States  
Department of Agriculture cooperating. Printed and distributed  
in furtherance of Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914

Extension Circular 605

March 1956

**G**ARDEN SOILS need to be worked at the proper time and given some fertilization in order to produce a crop.

#### When to Prepare

If the soil is worked before it is dry enough it will become hard and unproductive. In judging the time to work your soil take a handful of freshly dug soil, squeeze gently, and then release it. If it readily breaks apart when dropped, it is ready to work.

#### How to Prepare

The soil should be turned and broken up into small pieces to a depth of approximately 6 inches. This can be done with a plow, rototiller, shovel, or spading fork. If manure, compost, peat moss, sawdust, or other organic material is to be added to improve the soil structure, it should be done before the soil is turned. It will then be more uniformly mixed with the soil as it is worked.

#### When to Fertilize

Most fertilizers are used at planting time. When manure is used, spread it on the garden before working the soil. General garden fertilizers are used just prior to seeding or setting of plants. Quickly available stimulants are used after the plants are up and when growth is not satisfactory.

#### What to Use and How Much

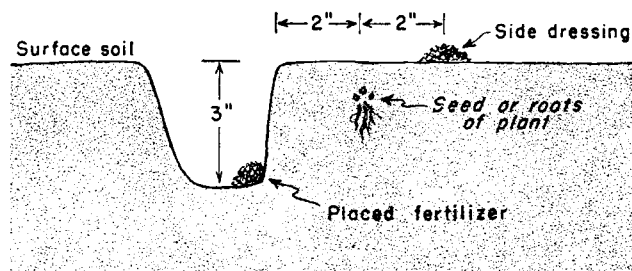
**BARNYARD MANURE** is a good general fertilizer. Annual applications will help improve heavy soils and maintain fertility. Spread 2 to 4 inches deep and mix thoroughly as you work the top 6 inches of soil. Rabbit and poultry fertilizer can be used at one-half this amount.

**COMPLETE GARDEN FERTILIZERS** sold on the market are plainly marked with per cent of available nitrogen, phosphoric acid, and potash. Some common ones have a formula of 6-10-4, 10-16-8, and 16-20-0. A large handful for each 3 to 4 feet of row placed 3 inches down and 2 inches out from the row will be helpful. Note drawing for fertilizer placement.

**STARTER OR QUICKLY AVAILABLE NITROGEN FERTILIZERS** like ammonium sulfate and ammonium nitrate are usually scattered alongside the row about 2 inches away from the plants. Use a handful to each 12 to 15 feet of row. Avoid getting material on plants.

#### How to Use Fertilizer

Complete fertilizers can be spread over all the surface like manures and worked into the soil. This would take about twice as much fertilizer as for placement. Placement before planting is done by making a trench beside the row where plants will go or the seeds will be planted. Take some fertilizer in a pan or bucket and spread it by hand using approximately the amounts suggested. Starter fertilizer can be spread on the surface and watered in or mixed with water and poured along the row. For use in water add a rounded tablespoon of the fertilizer to a gallon of water and use a cupful per plant or to each 6 inches of row.



**Your County Extension Agent  
has leaflets on many garden crops  
and can advise on varieties, diseases,  
and insect controls for your area.**