

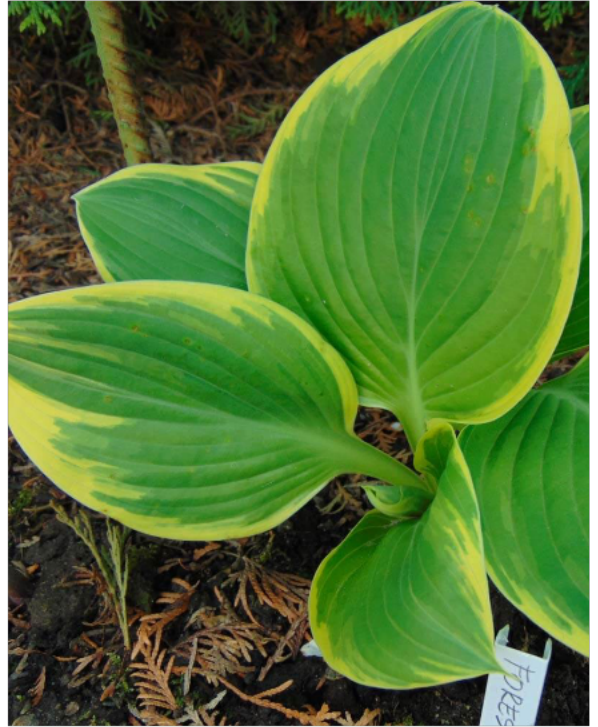
COMPOST GOOD FOR HOSTAS?

By the American Hosta Society

Hostas are a firm favorite for many gardeners, thanks to their ability to thrive in many environments. If you're thinking about how best to look after your hosta plants, you may have asked yourself – is compost good for hostas?

Compost is very good for hostas. It helps create soil rich in organic matter, which hostas are very dependent upon. Hostas are more likely to grow effectively in healthy soil, and compost is one important contributor to this.

Creating the right environment for your hostas is key to ensuring they are able to produce many leaves and a lush appearance.



WHAT COMPOST SHOULD I USE FOR HOSTAS?

It can be difficult to decide which of the available types of compost to pick for your hostas.

There are three main types of compost for hostas to consider:

1. Regular compost
2. Worm compost (vermicompost)
3. Composted manure

Let's go over each one below.

Regular Compost: As the most important element to growing hostas effectively is the healthy soil, it's best to look for compost that has a broad mix of organic matter. This means that most standard compost, which is typically blended from a number of sources – is absolutely fine and should work well.

Vermicompost & Manure Compost: Both vermicompost and composted manure may also work well, but it's worth ensuring that both of these are composed of a sufficient range of elements to provide the broad range of organic matter that hostas work so well in. Similarly, if you make your own compost, this too is likely to be effective.

It's hard to go wrong with compost selection for hostas, especially if you always bear in mind the ambition: to create a healthy soil that allows for a balanced structure and effective water drainage.

WHAT DOES COMPOST DO FOR HOSTAS?

Hostas grow best in healthy soil rich in organic matter, and so compost works very effectively to provide this environment for them. In fact, this healthy soil is their single biggest requirement and so it's crucial that you take this into account to give your hostas the best chance of success.

Compost is an important contributor to healthy soil because it impacts a number of important factors that relate to soil quality:

- The structure of the soil
- The soil's water retention
- The microbial population
- A slow-releasing macro-nutrient supply

By considering each of these factors, we can get a clearer understanding of why compost is so useful in helping our hostas thrive.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SOIL

Compost is made up of many elements, especially because of the different stages of decay that its component parts are in. This means that compost immediately provides a more natural structural variation to the soil to which it is added, allowing your hostas to build strong root systems.

Improving soil structure is especially important where the soil has been heavily worked, as working the soil too much can lead to an increased risk of erosion. It also helps loosen dense particles in clay soil and helps water and nutrient retention in soil with high sand content.

THE SOIL'S WATER RETENTION

The decaying matter in compost helps prevent a crust from forming on the top of the soil, which means water is more easily absorbed. In addition, the structural variation and the decay mean that compost allows the soil to retain a healthy amount of water, by providing a balance between water retention and drainage.

THE MICROBIAL POPULATION

The breakdown of organic matter in compost provides the perfect environment for beneficial insects, worms, and beneficial fungi. These all perform important natural functions, from nitrogen-producing bacteria to worms helping aerate the soil.

A SLOW-RELEASING MACRO-NUTRIENT SUPPLY

As it takes time for the organic matter in compost to break down, it ensures a slow release of nutrients which helps sustain the microbial population it supports over time. This ensures your hostas have the perfect environment in which for them to thrive over a sustained period of time.

CAN YOU USE A MULTIPURPOSE COMPOST FOR HOSTAS?

Multipurpose compost is a versatile type of compost that contains a variety of different elements, all blended together to provide an all-round compost that works in a lot of situations.

Hostas should respond well to multipurpose compost, with its typical composition providing many of the qualities of healthy soil that hostas rely on for strong growth.

However, there are many different manufacturers of multipurpose compost and no specific definition of exactly what the compost mixture needs to contain. This means that while the vast majority of compost mixes will work well with your hostas, you should check that the blend is typical.

HOW DO YOU PUT COMPOST ON HOSTAS?

If you are planting your hostas for the first time, then you have the opportunity to ensure healthy soil deeper into the ground. However, whether this is advisable depends on the quality of the soil, as disturbing the soil more than 1-2 inches can disrupt its structure.

If the soil quality needs improving, then compost can be mixed in at a ratio of approximately four parts soil to one part compost. If soil quality is already acceptable, you can simply apply compost on top of the soil.

If your hostas are already established (or you're not concerned about the overall soil quality), then simply remove any weeds from around the plant and apply 2-3 inches of compost on the surface of the soil around the plant. This will work its way into the soil over time and maximize its impact on your plants.

WHY IS COMPOST BETTER THAN FERTILIZER FOR HOSTAS?

Fertilizer helps plants grow by providing all the nutrients the plant requires. Hostas are no different and can benefit from fertilizer, but they do not require a great deal —

and so a slow-release fertilizer, liberally applied, is likely to be the most beneficial approach.

Although hostas can benefit from fertilizer, the most important precondition for strong hosta growth is healthy soil. This means that if your soil is not in top condition, it is likely to be more beneficial to apply compost to your hostas, rather than a fertilizer.

CAN YOU GROW HOSTAS IN JUST COMPOST?

It is better not to plant a hosta only compost. This is because it can have too high a pH, but that depends a lot on the compost manufacturer.

In addition to organic matter, the hosta needs minerals that are contained in the soil. These minerals may not be present in the compost, which can cause the leaves to turn yellow.

The best thing to do would be to mix the compost with the native soil. This will give you the perfect growing medium for your hosta.

Information Source: <https://www.ahs2019event.org/compost-for-hostas/>