

Two Ways To Boost Soil In One Season Without Spending A Dime



Introduction

Do you have dirt or soil? How do you tell which one? More importantly, how do you turn the former into the latter? This report shows you two ways to jump-start the life of your soil easily and without spending any money. Sound good? Ok, let's dive in.

First of all, let's get down to the nitty gritty. There is a big difference in soil quality depending on where you rent or buy your home. Without going into soil chemistry or whether there are dinosaur bones hiding in your back yard or not, let's talk dirt.

Dirt is what those of us who were born in the 1970s played in at some point. It is usually light brown, very dry, and crumbles easily into dust between the fingers of little kids and soil scientists. Not a lot grows in it, except for hardy weed species that come in to disturbed areas as pioneers to re-establish Nature's climb toward climax ecosystem.

Soil, on the other hand, is moist, black to dark brown, and has a lot of little particles of other things in it besides dirt. Air pockets house microscopic creatures that feed other creatures that feed spiders that..well you get the idea. Soil is literally teeming with life. It allows us to grow juicy Persimmons, sweet Strawberries, protein-rich peas, and savory herbs.

In other words, we want it. Or at least we should. Perhaps 'should' is a strong word, so let's just say it's a good thing if you like flowers, fresh produce, and birdsong. And so, without further ado, let's get to how to make it happen if all you've got is dirt, and avoid spending money doing it.

Here are two ways you can jump start the life in the earth surrounding your home..without spending any money!

Number One: Utility Companies

You know that truck that comes around your neighborhood from time to time towing the chipper? If you've ever been awakened at 7 or 8 a.m. to the loudest sound imaginable, then you know what I'm talking about.

Utility companies routinely maintain the electric wires that bring power to our streets, businesses, parking lots, and homes. To do this, they regularly trim the trees growing up through and near to telephone poles.

The great thing about this, if you're like me and want to know what the silver lining might be behind the cacophony of grinding wood into tiny pieces at the crack of dawn, is free mulch.

Mulch is amazing. If you spread it ridiculously thick, it locks in soil moisture just like a band-aid allows a cut to heal by sealing the wound from contact with the air. All kinds of things happen that couldn't before. Earthworms arrive from the depths, generating little tunnels and fertilizing them at the same time. These networks then become homes to millions of other creatures who can now breathe and move freely.

The soil no longer dries out so fast, and this means tree roots near the surface can get the moisture they need. They flower

more, and their fruit sets more heavily. The trees whose limbs were just a moment ago being sent to the chipper are now breathing a sigh of relief at a recycling job well-done. Their exhale is our oxygen, and it is beautifully scented I might add.

So the next time you hear one of these companies running their chipper or see them driving up the street near your house, note the name on the side of the truck. Give them a call, or just go up and say hello to the people working. Ask if they wouldn't mind dropping a load of fresh bark mulch in your driveway before they leave your street. They will likely be happy to do so.

In Portland, Oregon, for example, Asplundh trucks sport a sign on the back of their chippers with the number to call for free mulch delivery. The trick is to ask them when they will be on your street so you can plan for receipt of the mulch. If you can take advantage of their tree-trimming schedule, you can save hundreds of dollars and boost your garden, grounds, or neighborhood planting strips for years to come.

Number Two: Landscape Maintenance

A big missed opportunity exists in the Fall, when most people dutifully rake up the leaves carpeting the ground and bag them up to be collected by local trash and recycling companies.

These companies in turn compost the leaves either on-site at their facilities or via landscape supply companies. The leaf mulch is then sold back to us in bags to be spread onto our beds and planting strips.

Kind of makes you wonder why we do some of the things we do as a society, right?

With the decline in our precious pollinator species, most notably honeybees, but also butterflies, dragonflies, hummingbirds, and other beautiful creatures, it has never been a better time to start doing things differently.

We can help stop the loss of soil health (and thus biodiversity) while saving ourselves a pretty penny. The second most simple (and free) way to build soil is to rake fallen leaves ONTO garden beds and planting strips rather than out of them.

It's less finesse than badminton to work a rake around the nooks and crannies of shrubs and perennial plants. The leaves can be piled up to a reasonable 4" and tapered toward the edge of planting strips or garden beds. With a little practice you can even make your leaf pile look intentional and kind of ... nice!

In an article I read while earning my landscape architecture degree, a professional designer posed the question: why do Americans put so much money and water into lawns? The answer came out of a series of studies the author conducted in

which she framed areas of ecological diversity with materials like rocks, wood, or orderly rows of flowers. The result was that people could handle “wild” spaces as long as they had clear edges.

So if you want to save hundreds of dollars per year (and also help save the honeybee!) I suggest you bravely reverse your rake. Your soil will thank you!



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