

Quick guide to **VEGANIC MATERIALS**

to improve fertility in
your plant-based garden

Grow the veggiest veggies of all!

At Learn Veganic, we help aspiring gardeners grow in a way that aligns with vegan values.

All plant-based, no animal products!

We created this guide to show you a diversity of materials you can use in your veganic garden.

Want to learn more? You can join us for online courses and Q&A meetups, and follow us for veganic tips!

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alfalfa



chipped
branch wood



clover



comfrey



food
byproducts



grass



green
manure



hay



homemade
compost



leaves



living mulch



mycorrhizal
fungi



nettles



rocks &
minerals



seaweed



seed meals



straw



surface
composting



weeds &
wild plants



wood ash

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alfalfa

Alfalfa is great for boosting plants with nitrogen, potassium, and a wide range of micronutrients. Grow your own alfalfa hay to use as mulch! Or buy organically-grown alfalfa meal or pellets (100% alfalfa without binders).



chipped branch wood (from small branches)

This is the best material to regenerate your soil long-term, but it can stunt plant growth for months. Here's a good strategy: mulch with it in the fall & plant peas or beans the next spring. Only use chips from branches under 7cm in diameter.



clover

Clover is a legume plant, so it can access nitrogen from the air! Grow a clover patch or lawn, and add the clippings to your compost pile or as a thin mulch on your garden beds. It's also useful as a green manure or living mulch.



comfrey

Comfrey leaves are an amazing source of potassium, which is great for boosting fruit-bearing plants like tomatoes. Make a liquid fertilizer or use the leaves as a thin mulch. Comfrey spreads easily, so be careful where you plant it!



food byproducts

Many food byproducts can be used to improve fertility, like wheat bran, buckwheat hulls, rice hulls, spent hops from breweries, coffee grounds, molasses, coir, and cocoa hulls (warning: cocoa hulls are toxic for dogs!)

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grass

Green lawn clippings are a great nitrogen-rich addition to your compost pile! They can also be added in thin layers directly on your garden beds. And tall ornamental grasses can be used as a carbon-rich mulch in the fall.



green manure

Green manures are plants you grow to nourish the soil. Before setting seed, the plants are cut & buried (or left on the surface) where they decompose. There are tons of options, like buckwheat, oats, and nitrogen-fixing legumes.



hay

Hay is nutrient-rich and can be the main (or only!) source of fertility for your veganic garden when added as a thick layer of mulch. It also regenerates your soil! On the flipside, hay can bring perennial weed seeds to your garden.



homemade compost

Some commercial compost contains animal products, so homemade is best! For a simple compost pile, mix 1 part kitchen scraps or garden residues with 2 parts autumn leaves, and aerate occasionally. It's ready when it looks like dirt!



leaves

Fall leaves contain lots of minerals that the tree extracted from the bedrock. They're also great at building soil. Use as a mulch, add to your compost, or create "leaf mould" by letting them decompose in a pile.

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living mulch

Living mulch (like clover) is grown alongside main crops (like tomatoes). It covers the soil and helps support soil life. When the living mulch is cut down, it provides the main crop with fertility as it decomposes.



mycorrhizal fungi

Mycorrhizae form a symbiotic relationship with plant roots, helping plants access water and nutrients, especially phosphorus. Encourage these natural fungi by minimizing soil disturbance! You can also buy inoculants.



nettles

Nettles are a fantastic source of nitrogen, calcium & potassium, and can be turned into a liquid feed to boost your growing plants. They sting, so wear gloves! Nettles spread easily, so choose your location wisely if you plant them.



rocks & minerals

Rock dusts have a negative environmental impact from mining, so it's best to explore alternatives. They could be used sparingly if your soil has specific issues, ex. greensand for potassium deficiency or dolomite lime to raise pH.



seaweed

Seaweed contains a wide variety of micronutrients and natural growth hormones for plants. Many garden centers sell kelp meal or liquid kelp for a simple garden boost. Rinsed fresh seaweed can also be used as a mulch.

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seed meals

Soybean meal, cottonseed meal, flaxseed meal, canola meal & neemseed meal are high in nitrogen and contain other useful nutrients. They can be purchased but may contain pesticide residues unless organically-grown.



straw

Straw is a great carbon-rich material for building soil, though is low in nutrients. You can use it as a mulch (thick or thin!), add it to your compost, or even try growing directly in straw bales instead of soil.



surface composting

In the fall, you can compost garden residues right in the garden beds! Leave the roots in the ground, and place stalks, leaves, and flowers on the surface. Cover with mulch like autumn leaves or straw, and let it compost in place.



weeds & wild plants

Plants that grow spontaneously, like dandelion and lambsquarters, contain precious nutrients from your soil. Make a liquid fertilizer, add to a hot compost pile, or chop 'n drop in the garden. Don't let them go to seed!



wood ash

If you heat with wood, save the ashes! They're high in calcium and a good source of potassium. They're very alkaline. Add in a thin layer to your garden or compost. Ashes can also be purchased, like wood ash & sunflower hull ash.



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Carbon-rich materials to build your soil



- Chipped branch wood
- Straw & leaves
- Buckwheat hulls & cocoa hulls
- Note: these materials eventually provide nutrients too, but it takes a long time!

Build your soil and feed your plants a balanced diet



- Hay
- Compost & surface composting
- Certain green manures & living mulches (especially a diverse mix of plants)

Nitrogen-rich for early-season and leafy green plants



- Alfalfa
- Nettles
- Grass clippings
- Clover
- Soybean, cottonseed, flaxseed, canola & neemseed meals
- Certain green manures & living mulches (especially nitrogen-fixing legumes)

Phosphorus-rich for strong roots, flowering, and fruiting



- Mycorrhizal fungi (improves P uptake)
- Wheat bran
- Sunflower hull ash
- Cottonseed meal
- Certain wild plants (ex. lambsquarters)
- Certain green manures & living mulches (especially buckwheat)
- Rock phosphate (from mining)

Potassium-rich for healthy plants and fruit production



- Comfrey
- Ashes (from sunflower hulls, wood, etc.)
- Nettles
- Kelp
- Alfalfa
- Cottonseed, soybean & neemseed meals
- Certain wild plants (ex. lambsquarters, dandelions & purslane)
- Greensand & potash minerals (from mining)



Ideally, grow your own sources of fertility at home!

Revaluing local resources is also a great strategy



If purchasing materials, seek out eco-friendly options

Join us to learn more at
learnveganic.com

