

Wise Water Words

Hello, Fellow Gardeners. It's finally starting to feel like Autumn!

This is my favorite time of year. The 'to-do' list for gardeners is numerous at this time of transition. For me, the first chore to take care of is layering some more compost on all the garden beds, and any place plants, shrubs, or trees are planted. Organic material in the form of compost is an important addition to the soil because it provides so many minerals and nutrients that are required by plants. These nutrients need to be replenished over time, since the plants pull them out of the soil on a regular basis. To provide the most benefit, compost must reach the proper level of decomposition. Complete compost is aged for about a year to make sure the process is finished. The nutrients are then in their most elemental form, which is required for the plants to absorb them.

Compost is also a soil conditioner and enriches the soil, giving clay soil more pore space and drainage and allowing sandy soil to have more moisture holding capacity. This means that we will have to add less supplemental water when we regularly add organic matter. There are many ways to make your landscape a water-saving one, and applying compost is an excellent practice to save water.

Compost also helps to keep our soils temperate, meaning cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. As we shift into the cooler months, we can protect our plant's root systems with a layer of compost and mulch to help insulate them from the cold of winter. You can simply rake back the top layer of mulch, add 1" of compost and put the mulch back, adding more if needed. As you can see, compost is one of best supplements we can add to our soil for the health and resiliency of our plants. I hope this information convinces you to add it to your regular gardening routine.

For more detailed information, please visit our Digital Gardening Library, located on our [website](#). You will find numerous publications on compost, soil improvements, and mulch links in this library. SAWS GardenStyle SA is also a great resource for conservation practices and other helpful information. Composting information can be found [here](#). And you can sign up to have this free newsletter sent directly to your inbox so you don't miss any of their great suggestions [here](#).

If you prefer to learn about this in person, check our [website](#) periodically for any upcoming presentations on Compost, Soil, & Mulch, as this is one of our most requested topics. Or if you have a group you would like for us to come and give a presentation to, you can request a Master Gardener speaker [here](#).

I hope you all have a wonderful last month of 2021 and a safe holiday season.

Conservationally yours,

Anna Vogler
Water Conservation Coordinator