



Peonies
VII

Come forth into the light
of things, let nature be
your teacher.

William Wordsworth



Jeff and Linda prepare the soil
for this year's veggie garden.



Ask us about Vegetable Pots: the
perfect complement to your
garden!

The Secret's in the Soil: How to Maximize the Potential of Your Vegetable Garden

Growing season is finally here! You gaze upon your garden beds with excitement, imagining how, in a short time, you will be harvesting juicy tomatoes, succulent cucumbers, and crisp peppers. The secret behind a successful veggie garden begins before the first seeds are sown, when you prepare the soil for planting. The first step is *soil amendment*, which is the process of improving the physical properties of your soil.

It's a good idea to know what kind of soil you have (sand, clay, loam) when choosing an amendment. But no matter what the type, amending with compost will help any kind of soil. *Compost* is organic matter that has been decomposed and recycled as a fertilizer and soil amendment. It improves the soil structure, balances pH, adds organic matter, and improves drainage. In order to work effectively, soil amendment must be thoroughly mixed into the soil. (Note that amending is not the same as *mulching*, which is left on the soil surface instead of mixed in, and serves a different purpose.)

There are several methods of mixing the soil amendment with the soil. Tools such as the garden hoe, steel rake, spading fork, and shovel will get the job done, but require time and energy. Amending soil with a *rototiller* makes soil preparation a lot easier. The rototiller is a machine with rotating blades that aerates and breaks up the soil, and kills fully grown weeds. It saves time and effort on soil preparation, especially if it's a large piece of ground.

Before proceeding with the rototiller, however, you should be aware of the drawbacks. Rototilling kills adult weeds, but it also exposes weed seeds to sunlight, encouraging them to sprout. It's also very easy to till too deeply, which kills worms and fungi (important to plant growth), destroys the shallow root systems of many vegetables and flowers, and causes the soil to dry out more rapidly.

If you use the rototiller to mix your soil amendment, be aware of the proper tilling depths for your garden. Tilling slower will grind the soil more effectively and help ensure proper depth. After the initial amendment for the season, do not use the rototiller again, as it will break up the soil structure and destroy the food web that insects have created.

If you have any questions about how to proceed with your garden, we are more than happy to help!

What's Growing On? New & Noteworthy

- Jefferson Landscaping welcomes our new Maintenance Manager, Cathy, to our team! Be sure to say hello when you see her with the crew, or give her a wave when you see her on the road in the red Prius with our logo.
- We have a new look! You can find our teams tending to your landscaping needs in crisp, new uniforms: baby blue shirts, gray pants, and blue jackets. Of course, the Jefferson Landscaping logo and our quality, personalized service remain the same.

The Dirt on Garden Terms

- **Soil Amendment:** Mixing material into soil to improve such physical qualities as water retention, permeability, water infiltration, drainage, aeration, structure.
- **Compost:** Organic matter that has been decomposed and recycled as a fertilizer and soil amendment.
- **Mulching:** Material added to soil surface for the purpose of reducing evaporation & runoff, inhibiting weed growth, creating an attractive appearance.
- **Rototiller:** A machine with rotating blades that aerates and breaks up the soil, and kills fully grown weeds.