

Notes on Commercial Compost

The time to think about adding compost as you prep your garden for planting is toward the end of April or early May.

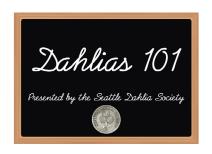
Most dahlia gardens benefit greatly from adding compost and working it into the top soil. Compost adds rich organic matter to your soil, will help control weeds, and helps retain moisture during our dry summers. Many growers consider this the best thing you can do to ensure a vibrant display of flowers later in the year.

The dahlia grower has many choices when it comes to choosing compost to add to your growing areas. Most instructions suggest compost be spread about 2" deep across your established garden areas and 3" for new gardens. How much do you need? If you don't have your own homegrown compost, you will buy compost sold by volume, usually cubic feet or cubic yards (a cubic yard is 27 cubic feet). Nearly all varieties of compost are available pre-bagged or in bulk; most sellers will deliver bulk amounts for an additional fee. Bagged compost is typically sold in 1.0, 1.5, or 2.0 cubic foot bags.

If you have a small garden area, say 100 square feet, for 2" of coverage you will need about 17 cubic feet of compost. Therefore, you will need 17 bags of the 1.0 cubic foot size, 12 bags of the 1.5 cubic foot size, or 9 bags of the 2.0 cubic foot size. Whichever is easiest for you to handle.

If you have larger areas in need of compost, 1 cubic yard will cover 162 square feet of ground, 2" deep. Enough math; let us look at some common local options for those without their own compost.





Local Compost Choices

Fertimulch ®

Manufactured locally by de Jong Sawdust and Shaving, this compost is a mixture of cow manure, horse manure, and sawdust. It contains no yard waste, and therefore is free of heavy metals or pesticides; it is screened and composted before being sold and has no smell. You can use this as either a top dressing to keep weeds at bay and moisture in the soil or as a compost additive before planting. The sawdust helps lighten the soil. Available in bags or bulk.

Contact: de Jong Sawdust and Shavings, 425-881-1825 or 425-252-1556. Main yard is at 11807 Avondale RD NE Redmond, WA 98052 and they have a smaller yard in Lake Stevens.

Bailey's Compost

Bailey's has been farming in the Snohomish Valley since 1918. Their well-aged compost is cow manure from Bailey's farming operation mixed with shredded yard waste, which is then fully aged, aerated, composted, and screened. It makes an excellent soil amendment or topsoil dressing for flower and vegetable gardens by adding organic matter and nutrients to the soil. Because the internal temperature in the composting process reaches 160F degrees, this compost is weed free. Available bulk or bagged.

Contact: Bailey's Compost, 360-568-8826,

12711 Springhetti Road, Snohomish, WA 98296, baileyscompost@gmail.com

Cedargrove Booster Blend

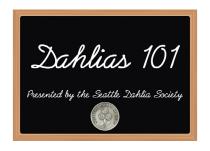
Cedargrove is a very large operation, with two major production centers in central Puget Sound. Booster Blend is recommended for amending gardens, both established and new. The mix includes manure and compost from yard waste. The final product is controlled by monitoring temperature, aeration, curing, and screening. Available either bagged or in bulk throughout the area.

Contact: Cedargrove, 877-764-5748, website for locations and dealers: http://cedar-grove.com/prod-ucts/compost-top-soil-products

Whitney Farms Planting Compost

This bagged compost is widely available at the big box stores and local garden stores. Whitney Farms brand is one of the Scott family of companies and features a long list of organic products. The compost is made from aged softwood bark and forest products compost, manure, dried poultry waste, and feather meal (made from poultry feathers).





Additional Tips

- 1. Take a look at your garden area. Some of our members use a "scorched earth" approach to prepare the garden before applying compost. They remove all signs that dahlias were grown in the space the past year (stalks, rotted flowers, leaves). Other members like to mulch the remaining canes and stalks back into the soil. You'll have to decide which approach works best for you.
- 2. Most instructions for preparing your soil for dahlias suggest adding a commercial fertilizer, such as a 10-10-10 mixture to the soil as well. Other additives, such as lime (to help restore the pH balance) or green sand (which is a soil conditioner that helps the soil retain moisture and nutrients) can be added well.
- 3. If you want information on doing home composting, Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Tilth have very good websites that answer most of your questions from containing systems to what to put into your home compost.

The Seattle site is at:

http://www.seattle.gov/util/EnvironmentConservation/MyLawnGarden/CompostSoil/Composting/index.htm

Seattle Tilth offers classes as well as information, their site is at: http://seattletilth.org/

4. If you have a small garden area and are using bagged product, consider mixing a couple of different brands together.

