
Soil Guide - How to improve soil quality

The common rule to planting any plants is not what you plant but how you plant. This guide will help you correct and soil problems you have and help provide the best start for your hedging and any other plants in your garden.

First off start by identifying what soil you have. Most people say "Our soil is heavy clay." Clay in fact is one of the better soils to have as it holds valuable minerals, the key to Clay is to unlock the minerals, so your plants can access it freely.

Clay Soil

- Feels lumpy and sticky when very wet
- Rock-hard when dry
- Clay drains poorly
- Few air spaces
- Warms slowly in spring
- Heavy to cultivate
- If drainage is improved, plants grow well as it holds more nutrients than many other soils

Tips to improve clay soil

Before planting, fork in lots of organic material. I.E. Compost, Soil improver, Well-rotted manure. This will fluff the soil up to make a nice loamy mix. In the worst cases sand can be added to lighten up the soil.

Sandy Soil

- Free-draining soil
- Gritty to the touch
- Warms up quickly in springEasy to cultivate
- Dries out rapidly
- May lack nutrients, which are easily washed through the soil in wet weather (often called a "hungry" soil.)

Tips to improve sandy soil

Before planting, fork in lots of organic material. I.E. Compost, Soil improver, Well-rotted manure. This will add body to the soil and help hold nutrients for the plants. If you find plants are not getting enough water, polymer gel which swells up to 200% to 500% and acts like a sponge. The roots growth into the gel and take water when they need it.

Silty Soil

- Smooth and soapy to the touch
- Well-drained soil
- Retains moisture
- Richer in nutrients (more fertile) than sandy soil
- Easier to cultivate than clay
- Heavier than sand
- Soil structure is weak and easily compacted
- A very good soil if well managed

Tips to improve silty soil

This soil is mostly found in the fens or areas where water has been drained from. Your plants will thrive easily with this soil. Before planting add some compost to give the plants a boost while there roots establish.

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Chalky Soil

- Alkaline, with a pH of 7.5 or more
- Usually stony
- Free draining
- Often overlays chalk or limestone bedrock
- This means minerals, such as manganese (Mg) and iron (Fe), become unavailable to plants, causing poor growth and yellowing of leaves
- This can be remedied by adding fertilisers

Tips to improve chalky soil

Before planting, fork in lots of organic material. I.E. Compost, Soil improver, Well-rotted manure. If your plants begin to yellow due to the lack of nature minerals, add some acid rhododendron feed to lower the PH.

Loamy

- The perfect soil
- Good structure
- Drains well
- Retains moisture
- Full of nutrients
- Easy to cultivate
- Warms up quickly in spring and doesn't dry out in summer
- Consider yourself very lucky if you have this soil

Tips to improve loamy soil

Not much can be done to improve your soil. Adding compost when planting is still a must.

We hope you've found our soil guide useful. If you have any further questions or need some advice please email info@hedgingplantsdirect.co.uk or visit our website www.hedgingplantsdirect.co.uk for further information.