

HOW TO... FEED YOUR PLANTS AND RE-USE OLD COMPOST



The food for your plants in most bought compost will run out after 4 – 8 weeks. To keep your plants growing productively, you'll need to feed them.

The most important nutrients for plants are

- Nitrogen (N) for leaf growth
- Phosphorous (P) for root growth
- Potassium (K) for fruits
- Trace elements are also needed for healthy growth and to give full flavour.

Most useful fertilisers

1. Tomato feed: this is high in potassium and is the best fertiliser for all plants that produce fruits, including tomatoes, strawberries, runner beans, courgettes, blueberries, peas etc. The bottle will tell you how much and how often to add. (If you have a supply of comfrey leaves, you can make your own tomato feed).

2. Chicken manure. A useful fertiliser for all leafy greens (salads, kale, chard etc) as it is high in nitrogen. Mix a handful or two into your compost before planting.

3. Liquid seaweed. Water this on to your plants once a week or fortnight to help keep them healthy. It contains lots of important minerals. It is like vitamins for plants!

4. Blood fish and bone. Useful for adding nutrients to old fertiliser so that you can re-use it to grow, for example, beans, potatoes, carrots or squash. It contains a balance of all the main nutrients plants need (N, P and K).

5. Worm compost or home made compost. If you have space for a wormery or compost bin, you can make your own compost. This is one of the best feeds for plants you can get! Mix it into old compost before planting – and / or add a layer to the top of your containers half way through the growing season. You can use well rotted manure in the same way (well rotted manure smell and looks more like earth than manure!).



Although called 'tomato' food, its actually good for all fruiting crops.



Chicken manure is a bit whiffy but cheap and good for all leafy crops

Reusing old compost

You can re-use compost for several years – however you must add food to it before re-using it as the previous crop will have used up the nutrients. Chicken manure is a good choice for any leafy crop, blood fish and bone for everything else. If you have your own compost, add that to (add between 10% and 50%, depending on how much you have).

What is easiest to grow in old compost?

The following crops are easiest to grow in old compost: salads, leaf crops like kale, herbs, beans, peas, squash and root crops (like potatoes and carrots). It is easier to grow tomatoes and chillies in new compost.