

## Amend Brother!

### The Importance of Good Soil

In growing, the most basic things like soil is usually overlooked. Many landscapers are knowledgeable about soil basics. However, we receive a surprisingly large amount of calls from those who do not consider how soil quality affects a plant's performance. They don't realize how good quality soil actually saves you money in the long run. Starting projects with good quality, healthy soil, will dramatically reduce replacements, help alleviate plant stress and lead to beautiful looking beds.

1. Soil is often overlooked as an important component in successful plantings.
  - When planting, you only see 50% of a plant. However, 100% of the plant's performance is directly related to the soil you put it in.
  - Purchasing the best quality plant and putting it into poor soil is like buying a Porsche and filling the gas tank full of rubbing alcohol.
2. Just like people, plants need balanced nutrients to grow and to fend off disease.
  - Fertile plants have a better chance to be healthy, lush and pest free.
  - Struggling, stretchy, stunted, or discolored plants can be showing you they need better soil conditions.
3. There are 4 main components to consider when amending your soil:
  - Nutrients
    - You need to fertilize. A proper balance of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium is critical.
  - pH
    - Plants grow best in a fairly neutral soil. If the pH is lower than 5 or higher than 8 the plants tend to struggle.
  - Soil Texture
    - It is crucial your soil be light and allow for air and water movement. In many soils, additives are needed to increase air porosity. This will make a happy root zone 😊
    - The right soil texture will help aid in proper drainage that is imperative to overall success. Most plants do not like roots to stay wet.
  - Water quality and its origin.
    - Well, pond and city water are all different. Each can affect your soil pH differently throughout the growing season, not to mention what minerals or additives are in the water.
4. Getting your soil tested.
  - A soil test generally tells the nutrient levels as well as pH levels so that you can make the best choice when purchasing fertilizers and other nutrients to amend the bed.
  - Keep in mind the importance of air porosity. A soil test will not tell you how tight the soil particles are. The soil test will indicate percentages of sand, silt, and clay. High clay content is an indicator that you may need to amend the bed to increase air space porosity. A good quality pine bark mulch works well for this.
  - It is recommended to test your soil in the fall so you have time to implement changes.
  - You can get your soil tested by your local cooperative extension service or at a reputable soil company.