



Digging into Organic Topsoil: Why Choosing Organic is the Best Choice for Your Gardens and Flowerbeds

From eating right to exercising regularly, promoting a healthy lifestyle takes work. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by all of the “do’s and don’ts” of maintaining a good diet and watching what you eat. One way that many Ontarians add more nutrients to their meals is by growing their own fruits and vegetables at home. Gardening is a popular hobby that allows individuals to stay active while producing healthy fruits and vegetables. Whether you are a first-time gardener or are looking to implement organic practices into your regular gardening routine, this article will provide advice, expertise, and information to help you make the most of your garden or flowerbed!

The Basics

What is organic gardening? The word organic is used to describe a range of products and practices. Ultimately, organic gardening focuses on avoiding harmful chemicals and encouraging natural growing processes. Ann Whitman, gardening author and journalist, writes that “growing organic food, flowers, and landscapes represents a commitment to a sustainable system of living in harmony with nature” (Whitman 3). Organic gardening involves making choices that help produce beautiful, healthy plants and produce, and benefit the environment.

Organic gardening doesn’t start with seeds or plants, the first step is to choose a quality soil that will create a good growing environment for your vegetables, fruits, and flowers. “Dedicated organic gardeners adopt methods that improve soil health and fertility, decrease erosion, and reduce pests and diseases through cultural and natural biological processes” writes Whitman (Whitman 3). Using the proper soil will ensure that your plants have the best chance of survival with minimal negative effects on the natural environment.

When choosing a soil for your garden, there are a few key factors to consider:

- Soil Composition
- Testing and Certification



Soil Composition

Just like plants, soils come in many varieties and ensuring that you have the best possible blend will improve the quality of your produce. Ideal soil for gardens and flowerbeds has a loose structure to allow water, air, and nutrients to penetrate through it. Soil that contains too much clay will pack down, making it difficult for the plants to spread their roots and access much-needed moisture. Soil that contains too much sand becomes very loose and allows too much water to flow through too quickly, without allowing the plants time to absorb the moisture.

Ideal soil contains organic matter known as **humus**. Humus is made up of the remains of decaying organisms and is packed with natural nutrients that not only help give soil a good crumbly or **friable** structure, but also act as a natural fertilizer for plants (Whitman 9). Unlike manufactured fertilizers, organic matter releases nutrients slowly into the soil, keep it nourished for long periods of time. A good gardening soil also includes an element that aids with moisture retention and keeps the plants well-hydrated.

Testing & Certification

Unsure of how to choose a good soil for your garden or flowerbed? Soils that are certified for organic growing have been thoroughly tested to ensure the best possible quality for organic gardening. The Centre for Systems Integration (CSI), a division of the Canadian Seed Institute, provides organic certification for seeds and soils that meet their rigorous testing and quality standards. By purchasing soil that is CSI certified organic, you can be sure that you are getting a product that undergoes regular testing to ensure the best and purest quality for your gardens and flowerbeds.

According to the CSI website, “The principal guidelines for organic production are to use materials and practices that enhance the ecological balance of natural systems and that integrate the parts of the farming system into an ecological whole.” This means that when you purchase a CSI certified organic soil, you can have peace of mind knowing that it was produced in a way that encourages natural growing processes.

Testing for soil involves regular inspections of the facilities used to produce the soil, as well as scheduled reviews of the blending process and the ingredients used in the soil. When a soil is deemed to meet CSI standards, certification is granted. Regular testing and diligent record-keeping are required in order to maintain organic certification.

The Benefits

So why use soil that is certified organic in your gardens and flowerbeds? Here are three reasons to choose organic when choosing your soil:

1. **Health** – Using organic soil means avoiding chemicals in herbicides and pesticides that could potentially harm the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment.
2. **Quality** – Soil that is certified organic has undergone rigorous testing and review to ensure the best and purest quality.
3. **Growth** – Because organic gardening seeks to focus on natural ingredients and practices, organic soil typically contains natural nutrients that encourage plant growth.

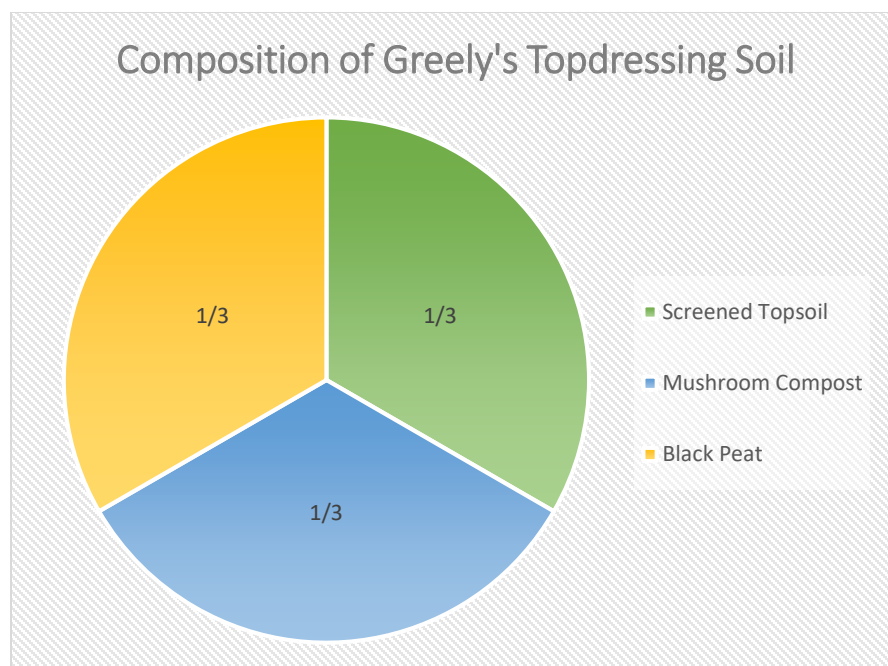


Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™

Greely Sand & Gravel is an Ottawa-based, family-owned company that has been producing carefully blended quality soils for more than 35 years. Based on a family recipe, Greely Sand & Gravel's famous Topdressing Soil has always been a customer favourite. In 2016, Greely Sand & Gravel had their Topdressing Soil certified for organic growing by CSI.

"We take pride in the quality of our products and wanted to respond to an increasing interest from our customers in a soil that had acquired organic certification," says Tara Hall, Vice President of Greely Sand & Gravel. "Having the certification makes people feel comfortable using our soil. They have peace of mind knowing that we sell only the best soil for their lawns, gardens, and flowerbeds."

Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™ is a blend of mushroom compost, black peat, and screened topsoil. All three ingredients are locally sourced and contribute to the overall function of the soil. Mushroom compost is an organic material that adds natural nutrients. Black peat gives the soil a higher rate of moisture retention. The screened topsoil provides structure to the blend. Working together, these three elements create a wonderful soil designed to nourish and enrich plants in gardens and flowerbeds.



"We hold all our products to high standards. We want to deliver the best possible product to our customers every time they order."

- Brent Pyper, Owner

Applications of Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™

One of the best features of Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™ is its versatility. This blend can be used effectively in gardens, flowerbeds, and even to topdress your lawn! Because it is blended in small batches every day, this soil is always fresh and full of nutrients for all your plants.



Why Choose Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™?

Apart from the general positive effects of using organic soil, Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™ offers the following benefits to gardeners:

- Proven Track Record of Quality
- Frequent Internal and External Testing
- Convenient Delivery and Pick Up Options

Proven Track Record of Quality

Greely Sand & Gravel has been meeting the needs of Ottawa gardeners for more than 35 years. Quality and customer service are top priorities for this family-owned business. In 2017 alone, Greely Sand & Gravel sold more than 33,000 cubic yards of Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™ in addition to thousands of cubic yards of screened topsoil and mushroom compost.

"The best soil I have ever had on my gardens and I have been a gardener all my life."

- Serge R., Customer



Frequent Internal and External Testing

In addition to complying with all CSI reviews and regulations regarding soil quality, composition and production, Greely Sand & Gravel also ensures that their soil is regularly tested and inspected. Soil samples are sent to laboratories to test quality and consistency and regular internal checks are performed by the screener operators on site at Greely Sand & Gravel.

Convenient Delivery and Pick Up Options

Whether you need a bucket-full or a truck-full, Greely Sand & Gravel makes it easy to purchase their soil for pick up or delivery. With two conveniently located landscape depots, customers can come and pick up Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™ in any quantity. Greely Sand & Gravel also offers residential and commercial delivery by the cubic yard gardening bag or by dump truck load.

"Friendly and easy service! We ordered a cubic yard of Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil and it came within a few days and was placed three feet away from my garden."

- Samantha W., Customer



Summary

If you are looking to make a positive change to benefit your health, your property, and the environment, why not try organic topsoil for your next gardening project? The benefits are numerous and the peace of mind is invaluable. If you would like more information regarding Greely's Organic Topdressing Soil™ or are ready to place an order, visit www.greelysand.com today!



References

Hall, Tara. Personal Interview. 12 June 2018.

Pyper, Brent. Personal Interview. 6 June 2018.

"What is Organic?" *Centre for Systems Integration*. www.csi-ics.com/what-organic. Accessed 14 June 2018.

Whitman, Anne, and The National Gardening Association. *Organic Gardening for Dummies*. Wiley Publishing Inc., 2009.

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