

Vegetable Gardening for SC Low country by Laura Lee Rose

Gardeners, it is a great time to plant a cover crop if the summer vegetables are finished. Buckwheat or cowpeas may be planted as a cover crop from seed with no additional fertilizer. It is always a good idea to do a soil test before adding lime or other amendments, because if the pH is not correct, fertilizer is not going to be available to the plants. It is also good to check to see if the plants grown in the garden are heavy feeders or not. See the list included for info.

Most of the summer vegetables: peppers, squash, cukes, and beans can be replanted for a second crop. It is usually a good idea to rotate plantings in the garden and check for insects and pests often. Look underneath the leaves. Use controls or pesticides only after correct identification of the pest. Encourage birds and other natural predators to the garden by growing a few plants for them and by providing shallow water on the ground for frogs and toads or bird baths, feeders, and houses for our feathered friends. Most of the harmful insects are on somebody's natural diet.

If you aren't ready to plant yet, because it is too hot, you may want to spread compost and mulch over the garden to cool the soil, build up the soil structure, keep weed pressure down, and prevent moisture loss. Compost is the natural organic material that contributes much more than nutrients to the soil. It is habitat for beneficial organisms, it helps the soil to retain moisture and nutrient holding capacity.

A good way to compost is by layering "brown" and "green" components in a ratio of 30:1. Some "brown" materials are sticks, twigs, straw, sawdust, and leaves. The "greens" are manures, grass clippings, kitchen (vegetable) waste. These add heat and microorganisms to the pile. Heat is important to the composting process. It not only speeds it up, but it also may kill pathogens (harmful bacteria and fungi which cause disease) and most weed seeds.

A note to you "composters" which may be helpful is: do not put diseased plant material or seedy weeds in the compost. Definitely don't add pet wastes or meat scraps to the mix either.

When these materials are layered time will be needed for the composting process to be completed. Other factors which affect the amount of time are moisture and oxygen. Anaerobic composting may not smell very nice, and it will take somewhat longer. A compost pile which is open at the top should have sufficient moisture except in long periods of drought. A series of bins can be used if turning is a problem. By the time the last bin is full, the first one should be ready to spread. Any uncomposted material can just be added to the next bin. The compost is ready to use when it looks like earth, smells like earth, and seeds will germinate in it.

Happy gardening from Clemson Extension!!

Laura Lee Rose an Horticulture Agent with the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service for Beaufort County.

| Heavy feeders | Medium feeders | Light feeders |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Asparagus | beans | peas |
| Broccoli | beets | okra |
| Cabbage | carrots | pepper |
| Corn | Swiss chard | herbs |
| Lettuce | cucumber | spinach |
| Onions | eggplant | sunflower |
| Irish potatoes | greens | turnips |