

LA BIODIVERSITY GUIDELINES

# HEALTHY SOILS



# Compost

Turn food scraps and yard waste into nutrient-rich compost by participating in [backyard composting](#), dropping your food scraps off at a [farmers market](#), joining a [compost co-op](#), or by participating in mandatory municipal composting by placing your food scraps in your green bin (via [OrganicsLA](#) in the City) to divert organic materials from landfills, avoiding harmful methane emissions while producing a great soil amendment.



PHOTO: LA COMPOST

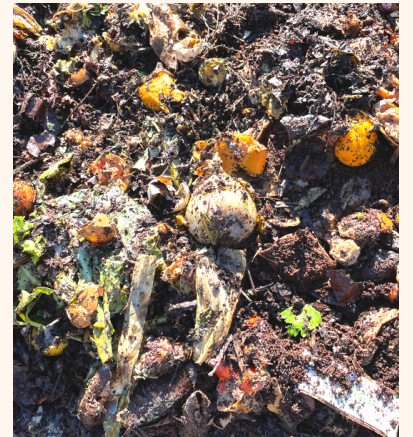


PHOTO: LA COMPOST



## Apply organic soils amendments

Consider using amendments like compost or mulch in gardens or yards as prescribed in LASAN's [guidelines](#) to increase water infiltration/holding capacity and suppress weeds. However, such amendments should not be used in wildland areas, unless part of a specific restoration objective.



## Test the soil in your yard or neighborhood

Use the [ribbon test](#) or jar test to understand your soil's texture. Send a soil sample to a testing lab, like [Wallace Laboratories](#), to understand if contaminants, like lead or other heavy metals, are present. Refer to the [SSURGO soil map](#) to learn more about your soil.



## Remediate and restore soils

Take steps to remediate contaminated, compacted, or unhealthy soils by adhering to [urban soil best management practices](#) to promote soil health and climate resilience.



## Unpave soils

Promote soil infiltration by removing impermeable materials (e.g. concrete and asphalt paving) when feasible and replacing them with plants or permeable surfaces (e.g., soil, mulch, or vegetation) to allow on-site infiltration, and to increase habitat, cover, and sources of food for wildlife.



## Avoid synthetic weed fabrics

Avoid the use of synthetic weed fabric, also called weedcloth or landscape fabric, which can [impede the movement of water and air and harm plants and soil](#).

## Eliminate the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides

Eliminating the use of synthetics helps to protect soil microbes, biodiversity, and waterways, and human health. For information on alternatives, see the information on Integrated Pest Management in the '[Maintenance](#)' section. In addition to having negative ecosystem impacts onsite, synthetic chemicals, especially when overused or when used during wet conditions, can find their way into runoff and negatively impact waterways. Please note that discharging pollutants, including pesticides and herbicides, into the storm drain system is prohibited ([LAMC Sec. 64.70.02](#)).





## **Increase vegetation cover and mycorrhizal fungi**

Increase soil carbon, nutrient availability, and healthy mycorrhizal fungi by growing a diverse array of living plants, using mulch, and retaining leaf litter in your garden.



PHOTO: THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION, MARIE ASTRID GONZALEZ

## **Use regenerative organic management practices**

For example, minimize soil disturbance (e.g., grading or tilling) and maximize soil cover (via mulch or plants). Refer to [Rescape's 8 Principles for Regenerative Landscapes](#) for additional guidance

# HEALTHY SOIL CHECKLIST

- Compost: Turn food scraps and yard waste into nutrient-rich compost by participating in backyard composting, dropping your food scraps off at a farmers market, joining a compost co-op, or by participating in mandatory municipal composting by placing your food scraps in your green bin (via OrganicsLA in the City) to divert organic materials from landfills, avoiding harmful methane emissions while producing a great soil amendment.
- Apply organic soils amendments: Consider using amendments like compost or mulch in gardens or yards as prescribed in LASAN's guidelines to increase water infiltration/holding capacity and suppress weeds. However, such amendments should not be used in wildland areas, unless part of a specific restoration objective.
- Test the soil in your yard or neighborhood: Use the ribbon test or jar test to understand your soil's texture. Send a soil sample to a testing lab, like Wallace Laboratories, to understand if contaminants, like lead or other heavy metals, are present. Refer to the SSURGO soil map to learn more about your soil.
- Remediate and restore soils: Take steps to remediate contaminated, compacted, or unhealthy soils by adhering to urban soil best management practices to promote soil health and climate resilience.
- Unpave soils: Promote soil infiltration by removing impermeable materials (e.g. concrete and asphalt paving) when feasible and replacing them with plants or permeable surfaces (e.g., soil, mulch, or vegetation) to allow on-site infiltration, and to increase habitat, cover, and sources of food for wildlife.
- Avoid synthetic weed fabrics: Avoid the use of synthetic weed fabric, also called weedcloth or landscape fabric, which can impede the movement of water and air and harm plants and soil.
- Eliminate the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides: Eliminating the use of synthetics helps to protect soil microbes, biodiversity, and waterways, and human health. For information on alternatives, see the information on Integrated Pest Management in the 'Maintenance' section. In addition to having negative ecosystem impacts onsite, synthetic chemicals, especially when overused or when used during wet conditions, can find their way into runoff and negatively impact waterways. Please note that discharging pollutants, including pesticides and herbicides, into the storm drain system is prohibited (LAMC Sec. 64.70.02).
- Increase vegetation cover and mycorrhizal fungi: Increase soil carbon, nutrient availability, and healthy mycorrhizal fungi by growing a diverse array of living plants, using mulch, and retaining leaf litter in your garden.
- Use regenerative organic management practices: For example, minimize soil disturbance (e.g., grading or tilling) and maximize soil cover (via mulch or plants). Refer to Rescape's 8 Principles for Regenerative Landscapes for additional guidance.

# GET IN TOUCH

LASAN's Biodiversity Program oversees the City's efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity. The program originated in 2017 when the LA City Council adopted the Biodiversity Motion and directed LASAN to lead Citywide biodiversity efforts.

☎ 800-773-2489

➤ [lacitysan.org/biodiversity](http://lacitysan.org/biodiversity)

