

# ■ Manure - Compost - Wood Chips - Straw

*How to make the best use of the Grosbreuil platform materials*

The Grosbreuil composting platform offers several complementary materials: **manure**, **compost**, **wood chips** and **straw**. Used together, they make a winning combination for your garden: improved soil structure, lasting fertility and better water retention.

## ■ 1 – Know your 4 materials

### ■ Wood Chips

Shredded green waste used as a **surface mulch**. It builds soil by adding humus and stimulating all soil life, **including fungi**. Acts as a true **sponge**, efficiently retaining water in the soil. Essential for a fertile garden.

- Spring or autumn
- 5 to 10 cm thick

### ■ Straw

The ideal surface mulch: it **prevents evaporation**, limiting water loss from the soil. Very effective against weeds. As it decomposes, it continues to **retain water** and enriches the soil with organic matter.

- Spring (after planting)
- 5 to 10 cm thick
- €2.50 per bale

### ■ Compost

Made from your bio-waste: a **balanced amendment** that slowly feeds plants and boosts microbial activity. Platform compost is fully matured and usable year-round.

- Spring and autumn
- 2 to 4 kg/m<sup>2</sup>

### ■ Manure

Rich in **nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium**. Improves soil structure. Must always be **well-composted** (6 to 12 months) before any spring application.

- Ideal in autumn
- 3 to 5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>

## ■ 2 – Preparing your garden for spring

1

December – January

### Apply composted manure

- Spread well-matured manure on the surface (3–5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) over the areas to work.
- Do not dig it in: let the earthworms do the work.
- Avoid areas intended for sensitive crops (see section 3).

2

February – March

### Light soil cultivation + compost

- Lightly rake the surface to 5 cm to aerate.
- Work in 2 to 3 kg/m<sup>2</sup> of mature compost.
- Soil should be workable (not too wet, not frozen).

3

March – April

### Planting + mulching

- Plant or sow according to the seasonal calendar.
- Apply 5 to 8 cm of straw or wood chips around plants (not touching stems).
- Straw prevents evaporation and retains water — even as it decomposes, this property remains. Wood chips act as a true sponge and enrich the soil with more humus.

### ■ 3 – Is manure suitable for all crops?

No, not all. Here is a quick reference guide:

Crop	Manure	Compost	Wood Chips	Straw	Notes
■ Tomatoes / Squash	■ Autumn only	✓ Ideal	✓ Mulch	✓✓ Ideal	Fresh manure = burn risk. Always compost first.
■ Potatoes	✗ Not advised	✓ Moderately	✓ Mulch	✓✓ Ideal	Manure promotes common scab.
■ Beans / Peas	✗ Unnecessary	✓ Light	✓ Mulch	✓ Mulch	Legumes fix nitrogen. Too much manure = excess foliage.
■ Lettuce / Spinach	✓ Moderate	✓ Ideal	■ Not in contact	■ Not in contact	Coarse mulch can impede germination.
■ Trees / Shrubs	✓ Spring	✓ Ideal	✓✓ Excellent	✓✓ Excellent	Thick mulch (5–10 cm) around the base.
■ Roses / Perennials	✓ Autumn	✓ Ideal	✓ Mulch	✓ Mulch	Surface compost in spring.
■ Carrots / Beetroot	✗ Avoid	✓ Moderately	✓ Fine mulch	✓✓ Ideal	Too rich = forked roots.
■ Onions / Garlic	✗ Avoid	✓ Moderately	✓ Fine mulch	✓ Fine mulch	Excess manure = foliage at expense of bulbs.
■ Lawn / Grass	■ Only if matured	✓ Ideal (sieved)	✗ Not advised	✗ Not advised	Chips/straw would smother grass.

### ■ 4 – Practical tips & frequently asked questions

#### ■ How do I get the dosage right?

Observe your soil. Sandy, poor soil needs more organic matter than heavy clay. The golden rule: **several small applications are better than one large dose**. When in doubt, a moderate compost application is always safe.

#### ■ Can I use all these materials together?

Yes! An ideal programme for a vegetable bed:

■ **Autumn:** composted manure spread on the surface

■ **Planting time:** compost lightly worked in

■ **Spring / Summer:** straw or wood chips as mulch

Each material plays a different and complementary role.

#### ■ Should I dig it in or leave it on the surface?

Compost and well-rotted manure can be **lightly incorporated** (10 cm deep). Wood chips and straw must **always stay on the surface**: if buried, they consume nitrogen instead of releasing it (*nitrogen hunger effect*). Straw **prevents evaporation** and continues to retain water even as it decomposes. Wood chips act as a **true sponge**.

#### ■ What if my soil is heavy clay?

Adding coarse wood chips and fibrous compost improves aeration. Avoid compacting wet soil. Work **in autumn** to let frost and earthworms do the natural loosening.

#### ■ Should I apply materials every year?

It depends on the material:

■ **Straw and wood chips:** renew **every year**.

■ **Compost:** 2 to 4 kg/m<sup>2</sup> per year to maintain fertility.

■ **Manure:** every **2 to 3 years** is enough on well-maintained soil.

### ■ Watch out for pesticide residues in manure

Some manure from large cereal farms may contain persistent herbicide residues. **Prefer the platform's manure**, sourced from known and controlled local farms.

### ■ Collect your materials at the Grosbreuil platform

As a member (€2/year), you can collect:

■ Manure ■ Compost ■ Wood Chips ■ Straw (€2.50/bale)

Open Wednesdays and Saturdays, 10am to noon · Stock varies

[compostons-ensemble.fr](http://compostons-ensemble.fr)