



Glossary of Gardening Terminology

Acidic: A soil, compost, or liquid with a pH between 0 and 7.0 (on a scale of 0.0-14.0).

Aerobic: Describes organisms living or occurring only when oxygen is present.

Alkaline: A soil with a pH between 7.0 and 14 (on a scale of 0.0-14.0)

Anaerobic: Describes organisms living or occurring where there is no oxygen.

Annual: A plant that blooms, produces seed, and dies in one year.

Beneficial Insect: An insect that benefits your garden by eating or laying its eggs, preying on other insects, controlling their population to your benefit.

Biennial: A plant that completes its full life-cycle in two growing seasons. It produces leaves the first year and flowers the second.

Biodegradable: Substances able to decompose and break down through natural bacterial or fungal action.

Biological Pest Control: Using beneficial insects or parasites to destroy garden pests.

Bolt: A term used to describe a plant that goes to seed prematurely.

Bone Meal: Finely ground material composed of light gray bone material that adds phosphorus to the soil.

Chelation: Soluble chelates are used in fertilizers to help keep nutrient metals, such as iron, mobile in the soil and thus available to plants rather than locked up in insoluble mineral salts.

Chlorosis: A yellowing or blanching of the leaves due to lack of chlorophyll, nutrient deficiencies or disease.

Cold Frame: An unheated structure made of wood, plastic or metal and covered with glass or plastic to protect plants from frost and act as season extenders.

Companion Planting: The inter-planting in the garden in such a way that plants benefit each other instead of competing against each other.

Compost: Completely decayed organic matter used for conditioning soil. It is dark, odorless and rich in nutrients.

Cover Crop: Vegetation grown to protect and build the soil during an interval when the area would otherwise lie fallow.

Crop Rotation: The process of moving specific crops to new plots different from the previous year.

Cultivar: The cultivated variety of a plant. A cultivar is a plant that is selected and cultivated by humans for a particular feature. They are also called hybrids and cannot produce seed that is true to the parent.

Cutting: A vegetative method of plant propagation whereby a piece of plant leaf, stem, root or bud is cut from a parent plant

Damping Off: Death and decay of young seedlings at ground level following fungal attack, often the result of over watering.

Dead Heading: The act of removing spent flowers or heads to prolong bloom, promote re-bloom, or to prevent going to seed.

Direct Seed: To seed directly into the garden soil instead of starting seeds in indoor or greenhouse trays.

Double Digging: A method of preparing the soil by digging a trench then putting the soil from one row into the next row.

Fertilizer: An organic or synthetic material added to the soil or the plant that is important for its nutrient value.

Foliar Fertilizing: A technique of feeding plants by applying liquid fertilizer directly to plant leaves.

Frost Date: This is the average expected last and first frost date for your area.

Fungicides: Applications of materials used to prevent the spread of fungi in gardens and crops, which can cause serious damage to plants.

Germinate: The beginning of growth in seeds. The act of sprouting above the soil. The breaking of dormancy in seeds.

GMO: (Genetically Modified Organism) Genetically modified varieties have had their DNA scientifically altered to make them more pest, disease, or chemical resistant at the gene level in a laboratory.

Green Manure: A crop that is grown and then incorporated into the soil to increase soil fertility or organic matter content.

Hardening Off: The process of getting plants grown under protection, in a greenhouse or indoors used to conditions outdoors.

Heavy Soil: A soil that contains a high proportion of clay and is poorly drained.

Heirloom Seed: An open-pollinated seed variety that has been passed down through the generations for at least 50 years. Also called Open-pollinated, the terms are interchangeable.

Humus: Dark loamy earth created by forces of decomposition with the conversion of organic matter.

Hybrid: A variety created by crossing two separate varieties to achieve desirable characteristics. New plants do not grow true-to-seed like open-pollinated plants.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM): A pest control strategy that uses an array of combined methods like natural predators along with pest-resistant varieties for farming. Pesticides are used as a last resort. **IPM** is an ecological approach to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides.

Limestone: A rock material commonly used to change pH in soil that contains calcium carbonate.

Micro-Nutrients: Some mineral elements are needed by plants in very small quantities.

Mulch: Any organic material, such as wood chips, grass clippings, compost, straw, or leaves that is spread around plants to hold in moisture on the surface and control weeds.

No-Till-Gardening: This type of gardening calls for no cultivation-or tilling-of the soil. Mulches are added and plants are planted through the mulch.

N-P-K: An abbreviation for the three main nutrients identified as absolutely necessary for plants are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K).

Open-pollinated: Varieties that are pollinated naturally by wind or insects without human intervention. Saved seed will be true to the original variety.

Organic Gardening: This method of gardening is based on building a healthy, living soil through using no chemical or synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. The main focus is to feed the soil so the soil will feed the plants.

pH: A scale from 0-14 that explains the degree of acidity or alkalinity of the water or soil.

Rhizome: A fleshy underground stem or runner. Creeping grasses spread by rhizomes.

Scarification: Seeds which must have their very hard outer layer scratched, or nicked for the seed to germinate.

Soil Amendment: Material added to the soil to improve its properties. Soil amendments are mostly organic matter or very slow release minerals and are typically worked into the topsoil.

Soil Test: A measurement of the major nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium) and pH levels in the soil.

Stratification: Seed which must undergo processing to re-create conditions similar to a winter dormancy.

Tender Perennial: a perennial or short lived perennial that will die out when exposed to sufficiently cold winter weather.

Tilth: Describes the general health of the soil including a balance of nutrients, water, and air.

Topdressing: Applying fertilizers or some kind of soil amendment after seeding, transplanting or once the crop has been established.

Transplanting: The moving of a plant from one growing medium to another.

True-to-seed: the offspring is genetically the same as the parent.

Untreated Seed: Seed that does not have any additional coating applied to the seed in the form of chemical applied to the seed coating.

Variety: Plants grown from variety seeds generally produce true-to-seed and can hybridize freely with other varieties.

Vermicomposting: The use of red worms to convert food scraps or other organic materials into worm castings.

Worm Casting: The digested organic waste of red worms. Considered by many gardeners to be the most nutrient dense organic compost available.

Xeriscaping: To create a low maintenance landscape with native plants to reduce landscape water use.