

## Comparing Alfalfa Green to Compost and Manure

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When thought of as a fertilizer and soil amendment, Alfalfa Green is commonly compared to compost and/or manure. Although all three are considered natural soil amendments, the three amendments have some key differences. All three work to improve the soil instead of directly feeding plants, but to make the decision about which of the three you should use in your next organic gardening project it is important to look at their characteristics to see which will have the most benefit for your soil.

### **Manure**

Manure is animal waste that is naturally high in nitrogen and other by-products of the animal's digestive system. As manure's nutritional value is dependent on what the animal is eating and the efficiency of its gut, the chemical composition of manure is highly variable. Depending what the animal has been eating, manure can contain viable weed seeds, insects, and fungi that are detrimental to the soil complex.

As well as the inconsistent nutrient quality, manure naturally has a basic pH and has a high salt content so the addition of manure has the potential to compound your soil concerns instead of treating them. No matter what the animal eats, its digestive system strips the food of much of its nutritional value before being converted into manure.

Many people avoid using animal manure because of the unpleasant odour and because of its source. Although manure seems like a good way to reuse waste and amend your soil, the potential impacts of using it in large quantities should be considered. This is often overlooked due to the relative abundance of manure, especially if your farm or your neighbour's farm has livestock. The convenience of having a large, continuous supply as close as the nearest barn, coop, corral, or pasture is appealing to many homeowners and farmers.

### **Compost**

Compost is full of beneficial nutrients, minerals, and organic matter but like manure, much of the final composition of the compost depends what goes into the system at the beginning. Depending what type of kitchen waste being used, compost can have variable salt content, pH, and nutrient levels and species. Management of the system will determine the moisture content of the compost. If done correctly, compost can kill viable weed seeds, harmful insects, and fungal/microbial soil pathogens. Compost is easy to work with and can be made by homeowners or purchased at most home and garden centers.

## **Alfalfa Green**

Alfalfa Green is 100% pure alfalfa forage, cut for the sole purpose of being processed into premium alfalfa pellets. The stage at which the alfalfa is cut and the pelleting process ensure that the pellets are of the highest quality and the best ingredients possible for your soil. The high protein of the alfalfa means it is the ideal food source for soil microbes to convert into plant-available nutrients. During pelleting process, the alfalfa is heated up as high as 1200°C, which kills any viable weed seeds and any negative fungus, insects, and microbes as well as bringing out alfalfa's natural pectin that binds the pellets.

Along with the three primary macronutrients (N-P-K), Alfalfa Green contains over 30 micronutrients, minerals, vitamins, amino acids, and naturally-occurring plant growth hormones. These nutrients and the addition of organic matter mean each pellet is essentially a tiny multi-vitamin for your soil.

Alfalfa Green has a neutral pH of anywhere between 6.2 to 6.6, which helps buffer acidic and/or alkaline soils. The salt content is very low so applying Alfalfa Green to sites with salt concerns does not add any additional salts. As well as being Certified organic, Alfalfa Green pellets are as good for the soil during their production as they are after application while being easy to handle.

## **Summary**

Although Alfalfa Green, compost, and manure are often used interchangeably when speaking of soil amendments, knowing the differences between the three is crucial for making wise decisions when amending your soil. Understanding the impacts of pH, microbe-plant-soil interactions, organic matter, and soil structure are key to making wise decisions about your soil and thus successful, sustainable plant growth.