

VALUE OF MANURE:

Manure does a couple of things for your soil. First, it contains a rich and wide range of minerals and nutrients. It provides all of the three main chemicals – nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, and plenty of it. Importantly, it also contains many of the micro-nutrients that we hear less about.

The second benefit of manure is that it adds to the composition of the soil. It contains both animal waste and straw (or sawdust.) In addition to all of those valuable naturally sourced chemicals and nutrients, well-decomposed manure adds valuable compost that holds moisture and promotes easier and healthier root growth.

TIP: When dealing with manure make sure that it is well decomposed. Work it into the garden in the fall if you are going to use fresh manure. Never use fresh manure in the spring or summer.

We emphasize well decomposed (or well-rotted), as fresh manure is very “hot” and can damage your plants. Have you ever seen a dog “do his thing” on the lawn and found a brown spot a few days later? This is because fresh waste is very high in nitrogen and burns plants. That same reseeded spot a few weeks later is the greenest spot in the lawn as the area is still rich in nitrogen.

NOT ALL MANURES ARE CREATED EQUAL

To suggest that all manures are the same is to be naive. The diet of each and every animal varies, especially between vegetarian and carnivores. Most of the manures, which you have regular access to, are vegetarian. But even within this group, diets are different and the digestion process functions differently. Dietary changes, especially seasonal, also affect the final “finished product.”

As an example of differences, horses eat lots of field grasses and weeds. They do not pulverize their food as they eat it and their digestive tract allows many weed seeds to pass through unaffected. As a result, the horse excretes the seeds. People who use this manure, experience far more weeds in their gardens.

Cows also eat lots of field grasses and weeds. On the other hand, they chew and grind their food far more thoroughly and their digestive system processes the food far more efficiently. The “end” product has far fewer weed seeds in it.