

The 1st C: Control Compaction

Watch where you walk.

The weight – downward pressure – of our walking compresses soil's structure, leaving little room for the underground pathways that roots, water, air and soil critters need to travel.

While soils can easily handle the odd footstep or wheelbarrow rut, repeated walking on soil results in the kind of thing you see with any well-worn forest or meadow pathway – a hard surface that rejects water and plant roots alike. The downward pressure eventually collapses the sponge structure built by your critters and makes your soil more like a concrete block.

Here are some ideas on how to control compaction in your garden or your yard.

- **Add compost each year**, in the spring or fall. Compost feeds the critters that consistently work to build your soil's sponge-like structure
- **Disturb the soil as little as possible**. Digging, roto-tilling, turning the soil over – all gradually destroy the lovely sponge structure of your soil.
- **Keep the same pathways year after year** and cover them with wood, bricks, or stone. Or, you can add compost and grass seed in the fall and turn your garden pathways into grass ways. Grass has a huge root system that helps soil resist compaction.
- **Be careful when you add fertilizer (synthetic or organic)**. More is not always better. Too much nitrogen, for instance, can attract weeds and reduce organic matter, which leads to compaction. Soil tests are helpful, but so is common sense. Don't over-feed, practice the 6 Cs, and your lawn and plants will thrive.



Control Compaction ... one of the 6Cs for Healthy Soil