

# Repair (Replace) the Bed

There are 3 ways of preparing a bed that usually give poor results:

1. **Filling a bed with a commercial “potting soil”.** All commercial potting soils (except for our Laguna Hills Nursery brand) are 80-100% organic. The majority of plants will not perform well in these soils after 6-12 months, and there is no way to efficiently repair them short of total replacement.
2. **Amending the soil in the bed with a generous amount of compost.** The more compost is added the poorer the results. For many decades homeowners have been told that soil can be improved by adding compost. They have also been told that more is better. Unfortunately these theories are unproven and wrong. In Nature, compost and/or duff belongs as a mulch covering the soil, not mixed in. (See *Soil*) Homeowners have been told to make their soil black and rich by amending heavily with compost. Unfortunately when amended soil turns black it is detrimental to root health.
3. **Filling a bed with “topsoil”.** We have also seen a lot of trouble when planting beds have been filled with artificial “topsoil” that actually is a mixture of sandy loam & compost. The ratio of this “topsoil” is sandy loam:compost at 60:40 or 50:50. Topsoil in Nature has very little compost mixed into it. These fake “topsoils” usually are brownish or darker in color with an acrid, resinous or sewer odor.

Unfortunately the detrimental effects of mixing soil and compost can last well over a decade, depending upon how deep this layer of topsoil is. This amended soil often eventually (within a few months) kills plants like Avocado, Banana, Citrus, Gardenia, Jasmine, Pittosporum and many more. It will usually allow grasses, junipers, palms, pines, roses, and Rhipiolepis to survive. The plants that survive are usually stunted with poor root systems. It is difficult to remove compost.

The amended soil is usually a darker color than the native soil. Remove with a shovel. I have filled many empty 5-gallon and 15-gallon containers with amended soil and hauled them to the local landfill. I recommend to refill the beds with natural soils like *sandy loam*. Some building supply companies call a similar type of soil *fill sand*. Other types of permanent materials that can be used are *sand* and *decomposed granite* (DG). Avoid types of DG have hardeners added (for use on pathways). I have used a 50:50 mix of sandy loam and DG with excellent results.

Once the bed is refilled with good soil and the plants are installed, it is best to cover the surface with a thick layer of organic mulch.