

Healthy soil is the key to successful gardening – plants growing vigorously in good loamy soil, with a supply of nutrients and water as required, are less prone to disease and pest attacks and will reward you well for the effort you put in.

The following tips are for creating new garden beds or re-working existing beds.

- Remove all turf, weeds and other plants you don't wish to retain, then dig soil over to a depth of 30-40cm, avoiding roots of existing plants (if any) and breaking up large clods as you go.
- Heavy loams and clays that have never been used for beds or have been neglected for several years will respond well to a good handful of **Gypsum** per square metre. Leave on the surface for rainfall or watering to carry it into the soil. **Gypsum** binds fine particles together to create a friable, workable soil – it is slow acting so patience is needed.
- **Garden Lime** or **Dolomite Lime** may also be added at the same rate to reduce acidity in soils that arises from repeated use of fertilisers. Optimal pH range for most plants is between 6 and 7 (slightly acid) although there are exceptions, like carnations and sweet peas, which like an alkaline soil (pH greater than 7).
- Do NOT add lime to beds that are to be planted with camellias, rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias, hydrangeas and other acid-loving plants!
- To encourage earthworms and other beneficial soil organisms, add plenty of **Pure Magic Organic Compost** and **Cock-Doodle-Poo Organic Poultry Manure** and fork through the top 30cm or so of soil before raking to a level surface.
- When planting is complete, water in new plants with **Plant Starter** or **Sea Tea soil conditioner** and mulch the entire bed with **Pine Bark Mulch** to conserve moisture and minimise weeds.
- Keep plants growing well by feeding every couple of weeks with **Organic Liquid Fertiliser**.
- Every three months or so from late winter to mid autumn, add **Certified Organic Fertiliser** to the feeding regime – the worms and your soil will love you for it!

