



## One-Afternoon Soil Upgrade Checklist

### Before you start

- Pick your bed area and size (no wider than 3–4 feet so you do not step on it).
- Check soil moisture (slightly damp is best—not mud, not dust).
- Gather tools: shovel or spade, garden fork, rake, wheelbarrow or buckets, compost, mulch.

### Step 1: Clear and loosen

- Remove grass and weeds where the bed will go.
- Shake soil off roots and discard tough roots and rocks.
- Loosen top 6–8 inches of soil with a fork or spade (do not flip huge chunks; just crack and break them up).

### Step 2: Add compost

- Spread 2–3 inches of finished compost over the loosened soil.
- Mix compost into the top 6–8 inches until soil feels more crumbly and easier to dig.

### Step 3: Shape beds and paths

- Rake the surface smooth and gently mound the bed slightly above the paths.
- Mark paths with cardboard plus wood chips or other rough mulch so you stay off the bed.

### Step 4: Plant and mulch

- Plant seeds or transplants in the prepared bed.

- Once seedlings are four inches tall or transplants are planted, add 3 inches of organic mulch between rows and around plants.
- Keep mulch pulled back slightly from stems so they stay dry and can breathe.

## **Optional same-day extras**

- Collect a soil sample before you spread the mulch but after you mix the compost with your soil to send for testing.
- Lay simple drip or soaker hoses on the bed before mulching.

If every box is checked, you have given your new vegetable bed a solid, same-day soil upgrade that will keep improving each time you add compost and refresh the mulch.