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DURANGO NURSERY & SUPPLY

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Dealing With Clay Soils

Native Soil Characteristics

The Western Slope of Colorado, especially the four corners area, is known for high clay content in its soils. Clay soils compact readily which squeezes oxygen out of the soil. Lack of soil oxygen prevents plant roots from digging deeper into the ground, creating a root system that is easily compromised by excessive water and wind. Due to poor drainage, clay soils often get waterlogged when heavily irrigated, rotting the roots of plants.

Treatment and Maintenance

Plants need air and water in their root zones. To remedy our clay soils, we must add organic matter and encourage the presence of soil microorganisms, both of which aid in decreasing compaction.

The alkaline nature of our soils will return over time if not maintained. Amend your soil every year with organic matter such as compost, worm castings or peat moss to build soil tilth and fertility. In annual and veggie beds, mix amendments into the top 6-8 inches of soil. In perennial beds and soils you cannot dig up top dress amendments around the root zone of plants. Remember that soil takes time- you won't fix your clay soil in a year.

Plant Selection

It is your responsibility to select the right plants that are adapted to our clayey, alkaline soils. Native species have adapted to the growing conditions of this area. Still, regularly amending your soil can increase the lifespan of your plants.

Durango Nursery has a large selection of native and adapted plants that thrive in our soils. Ask one of our associates for the plants that best suit the microclimate in your space!