



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is the Black Earth Compost story?

Our business was started in Gloucester, MA, in 2010 by four partners—Conor, Justin, Andrew, and Curt—collecting food scraps from the community and converting them into a rich soil amendment for local farms and gardens. Today we build this recycling infrastructure to strengthen the regional food system and make New England strong!

Are all composts the same? No.

“Compost” can be used to describe a wide range of broken-down organic materials. What really matters is what organic matter ingredients you’re starting with. Black Earth Compost uses food scraps because they’re a sustainable, long-term source of all the nutrients needed to make new food.

Is the compost tested? Yes, thoroughly.

We test our compost for nutrients, heavy metals, herbicides, salts, PFAS, Soil Food Web Biology and we even do in-house plant growth trials to ensure you’re getting the best possible product. See online for all test data.

Is Black Earth Compost organically certified by OMRI? No.

Currently, compostable bags, cups and forks are not allowed as a compost ingredient—even when they are made from non-GMO organically certified corn and made of 100% plant material. Otherwise we would be allowable, especially given that we do not use grass in our compost (because of herbicides) and test out the wazoo for quality.

Does your compost contain weed seeds? Nope!

Our compost reaches 150° F for 2 months and during multiple turns. That’s hot!

Where is it made? At one of our 4 facilities in MA. (1 more to come in CT in 2027)

How do I use compost? Take your pick!

Planting mix/Amend Bed (generally before plants are planted)

Mix 50/50 (or less) with existing soil in your raised bed, planting hole or garden. Then plant!

“Top dress” (for after planting or for perennials where you can’t disturb roots)

Simply mulch near the perennial or potted plant with 1 or 2 inches of compost. Stay a few inches from stem.

Feed your trees

Similar to topdressing but for your trees. Apply compost under the drip line of the canopy, not near the tree trunk.

Lawn application

Spread or rake a thin layer over your lawn. Seed first if over-seeding. Allow two rains in order for it to “disappear”.

What is FarmWorks?

10 cents of each Compost bag sold at a garden center subsidizes our compost to go to small MA vegetables farms.



Groton, MA compost site



Manchester, MA compost site

Questions? Email us at Compost@BlackEarthCompost.com or use the Garden Center hotline 978-381-5280

BLACK EARTH COMPOST PRODUCT Q&A

COMPOST

How do I use compost?

Mix it with your soil 50/50 or less. This will rejuvenate a “tired” soil, prep a bed for planting or allow you to get a 2nd year out of potting soil.

Where is it made?

At one of our four facilities in MA (with one more to come in CT in 2027).

Is it vegetarian?

No, our compost contains lobster, meat, cheese, fruits, vegetables, breads, and other food scraps. This diversity gives it more “punch” a standard lobster compost.

Is this the only Voucher Redeemable product?

Yes. Customers using Black Earth’s voucher program can only redeem it for this bagged product.



LEAF MULCH

Black Earth Leaf Mulch... is it mulch?

Yes, it is to be used just like any other mulch—a mulch replacement designed to feed the soil. Unlike wood mulch, it does not need to be removed.

What is it made of?

Last year’s leaves, ground up and partially composted enough to kill weed seeds, but not so much that the leaves completely break down.

Do you put food scraps in with the leaf mulch?

No, this product is created separately.

What color is it?

Dark brown when it's dry and black when it's moist. That change is exactly how organic matter is supposed to behave. If a mulch is black even when it's dry, that means it has been dyed.



POTTING SOIL

Can I use it like any potting soil?

Yes! Use it to fill your planters, pots, or containers. It is not specifically designed for seed starting, so expect a lower germination rate unless you are diligent about watering.

Can I use it to amend a raised bed?

Yes. It will improve soil texture thanks to the rice hulls, compost, and aged pine bark. The fertilizer components will help spur new growth.

What makes it sustainable?

We source our ingredients domestically within the USA. The rice hulls, pine bark, and crab/lobster shells are all byproducts of other industries that are in plentiful supply.



COMPOST & BIOCHAR

How do I use the biochar blend?

Use it just as you would a bag of compost, especially where you want long-term soil performance, such as when planting trees and shrubs.

What is Biochar?

Think of it as a “labyrinth” of negatively charged charcoal that holds onto positively charged molecules like Ca, Mg, K, water and more! It increases the soil’s water and nutrient-holding capacity and lasts for 100+ years in the soil.

What is the benefit of using Biochar?

- Reduced Tree Mortality: Studies show a 30–50% reduction in mortality for trees planted with biochar.
- Increased Water Retention: 25% increase at a 10% concentration of biochar.

What is Black Earth Biochar made of?

- 80% Black Earth Compost: Sourced from leaves, sticks, lobsters/shellfish and food scraps.
- 20% Biochar: Sustainably sourced from Standard Biocarbon in West Enfield, Maine.

