Fact Sheet 2.

GREEN MAN CHAR

Sustainably produced Charcoal and Biochar Products

COMPOSTING WITH BIOCHAR

Compost is a fantastic addition to any garden, increasing the nutrient content, adding organic carbon and improving the structure of your soils. All of these things are beneficial to gardeners and horticulturalists around the country. Biochar may be able to act as a sustainable alternative to peat based substrates – meaning you can be sure that the compost you are using contains no unsustainable substrates whilst still retaining the growth promoting benefits.

Biochar addition to your composts can improve the structure of composts as well as reducing composting times and potentially reducing both ammonia and methane emissions from your compost piles. The reduction in gas emissions will help reduce unpleasant odours from the compost and help prevent the release of harmful greenhouse gases into the environment.

For addition to compost a rate of biochar addition of between 5% and 20% is recommended. When the biochar is added to the compost, it will become charged with nutrients which will bind to its large surface area. This will enable the nutrients in the compost mix to be maintained in the substrate and help allow the biochar to increase the growth of flowers, trees, fruits and vegatables across your gardens.

A problem with composts is that – compared to biochar – they are relatively temporary soil amendments and will need to be reapplied year after year to create top-notch garden soils. Biochar on the other hand lasts for hundreds if not thousands of years in the soil, so once applied as part of a compost mix will not only help retain nutrients and organic carbon but also improve the chemical and physical nature of the soil for many years.

At a botanic garden in Hong Kong biochar is now being produced in large quantities from the botanic garden's waste stream. The biochar is being mixed with compost and then used in general running and management of the garden as well as in reforestation programs. The biochar compost mix will help improve the physical and chemical properties of the soil and improve plant growth across the garden for many years to come.

References: Camps, M., Tomlinson, T., Cayuela, M., & Sánchez-Monedero, M. A. (2015) The Use of Biochar in Composting. International Biochar Initiative. http://www.biochar-international.org/sites/default/files/Compost_biochar_IBI_final.pdf
Reforestation with Biochar in Hong Kong - http://www.esenergy.com.au/about-us/projects/reforestation-with-biochar-in-hong-kong

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