



SOIL IN URBAN GARDENS

Gateway Greening (GGI) promotes and provides financial support to build raised beds in community gardens and provides a clean, organic soil mix that is ideally suited for growing food. The soil mix is obtained from St. Louis Composting and is delivered to the site on garden installation day. The mix is a combination of top soil, compost, sand and well rotted leaf mulch.

Gateway Greening also provides lumber to frame the raised beds. After the beds are built, a barrier of either newspaper or cardboard is put down and is covered with at least 10 inches of soil. Garden installations are supervised by staff and Master Gardeners directing neighborhood volunteers and gardeners.

In addition, existing community gardens and school gardens may order compost and tree mulch through Gateway Greening. This is delivered directly to the garden in order to maintain the high quality of soil mix over time.

GATEWAY GREENING DOES NOT RECOMMEND GROWING FOOD CROPS DIRECTLY IN URBAN GROUND FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- Urban land may contain harmful contaminants including lead, asbestos and arsenic. These contaminants can also be air-borne from industry or passing vehicles. The scientific community has informed GGI that these elements are not readily absorbed by food crops. *The biggest threat to health is from consuming unwashed produce, unwashed hands handling food or directly ingesting soil. This is of particular concern with gardens serving youth.*

- Abandoned lots often have buildings collapsed into their foundations with only a thin skin of top soil concealing the remnants of demolition, concrete and trash. Digging into these remains is impossible let alone attempting to grow food in soil conditions that are devoid of nutrients..
- Abandoned lot soil is compacted and is not reliable enough to grow food successfully.
- Urban top soils may have been removed by construction leaving large amounts of clay that will not drain properly.

If raised beds framed by lumber are not used, berms are built with layers of clean, high quality organic materials. This is the case for larger scale installations such as the City Seeds Urban Farm where lumber would be cost prohibitive. The berms settle to a height of 18-24 inches.

Gardens in North County or areas with high quality soil are encouraged to have their soil tested rather than risk potential problems.

LOCAL SOIL RESOURCES

St Louis Composting
560 Terminal Row*
St. Louis, MO 63147
(314) 868-1612

**St Louis City location.*

There are also locations in Maryland Heights, Valley Park and Belleville, IL. Visit their website for more details.

<http://stlcompost.com/>

Route 66 Landscape Supply Center, Inc.
18900 Franklin Road
Pacific, MO 63069
(636) 271-3352