



## STEP 2

### PLANTING

# Site Preparation

1. Prepare the site of planting by ensuring area is clear of weeds and turf, including roots.
2. Incorporating **compost** into your soil is usually a good idea. It will provide conditions for a complex community of soil organisms and nutrients that are helpful to your garden plants. It is not recommended to amend your soil in any other way as the majority of native plants do not do well in rich soils.

Dig in 2 to 4 inches of household compost, well-composted manure, or garden leaves into the top 6 to 10 inches of garden bed soil. The overturning of soil will cause dormant weed seeds to germinate so you may want to wait for those to display themselves before planting. This wait time will also allow the soil a chance to settle, which can be helped along if it rains heavily, so that the roots of your newly planted plants don't end up exposed later.

Clay loam soil (soil that is mostly clay) is common in Edmonton yards. Due to its small particle size, clay holds water very well and also is very compact in dry conditions. Many native plants better appreciate soil that drains well. You can incorporate 2 inches of concrete **sand** from landscape supply centers to help loosen clay soil. Only add sand if you are also adding compost otherwise you will create even more difficult soil conditions, making the ground more similar to cement.

Adding sand and compost to clay soil makes it more loamy. Loam soil drains better (due to sand) than clay soil but holds water longer and nutrients better (due to compost) than sandy soil, allowing plants to access these resources.

A quick soil structure test can be done by rolling moist soil around in your hands. Sandy soil will not stick together due to its large particle size and will feel gritty. Clay will keep the shape formed by your hands and feel smooth. Loam will stick together but crumble fairly easily and will be a mix of a smooth and grainy texture. For a more in depth discussion on soil and soil tests, refer to Chapter 3 of CMHC's [Landscape Guide for Canadian Homes](#).

