The many benefits of sheep manure

To be honest, I'm a big fan of sheep manure. It's a deserved attraction because, as animal manures go, it has countless benefits - one of the major ones being it won't stink out the garden and be the cause of neighbour angst.

Odour aside, sheep manure is an incredibly versatile animal manure. One of the benefits that I like the most is its ability to be used for more than just a soil amendment. As it's so cheap here in Australia, being the 2nd highest producer of sheep in the world (China - 1st, NZ - 6th, UK - 7th and US - 11th), I've started using it as mulch. Mulch? Are you sure that's wise?

Sure it is. Sheep manure is low in nitrogen - compared to other animal manures - so it won't burn your plants. Plus, it's a natural slow-release fertiliser and this is part of the versatility of using it as a mulch. I usually pour it on to about a depth of 50mm (2”) ensuring that it doesn't touch the plant's stem. Then I just water it as I would normally reticulate the garden.

I've found a local supplier where I can get guaranteed weed-free marbles at a rate of $10 for a 100L bag which is fairly cheap (comparedly cow manure costs $8 for 25L and chicken approx $11+ for 25L). The only down-side is that the manure is very dry and takes a few days before it will retain enough moisture to begin breaking down.

Some gardeners will only ever dig it in to their beds arguing that unless you do it will become so hard that it will never break down. This is not the case, and when piled as high as I do you can dig into the manure mulch within a few weeks and see the layer directly above the soil beginning to decompose.

So what are the myriad of benefits for using sheep manure;

- Natural slow-release fertiliser
- Can be used as an organic mulch
- Low-odour
- Easy to handle
- Relatively inexpensive
- Fairly easy to obtain and most providers usually offer door-side delivery
- Lower in nitrogen than other manures yet still high in Phosphorous and Potassium - great for plant growth
- Depending on the source can be obtained weed-free
- Looks great

While I do use other manures in my garden - chicken in the veggie patch, horse and cow as additives for the compost heap - I much prefer sheep manure in my garden beds.

These articles may also be helpful...
- What does 'Sheep Manure' and 'Paper' have in common?
- Bagged Compost vs Farm Direct Manure
- 10 Benefits of growing a Palm Tree
I've read about many different types of manure but this was the first time I read about sheep manure. If it was available here I'd give it a try too!

Wish we could get that here, it was sold in bags at Antique Rose Emporium in Texas which was near where we lived. It was the best.

Frances at Faire Garden

Once the neighbors had a couple sheep and they (the sheep) used to visit on many days and leave their droppings. I used these few pellets in my herb planter and the basil and other herbs grew wonderfully.

I'll second that. There is nothing like loads and loads of sheep do dahs. I've been using them on trees, shrubs flowers and veggies for almost 50 years. In our first garden in Melb, we had access to the Howard Florey Labs, doing sheep research and got 2 wheat bags full of grain fed sheep manure a week. You should have seen my Roses! Now on a farm in SA the shearing shed is my gold mine. Great to see someone younger taking up the cause!

great info! thank you -- my question is: how long must you compost sheep manure before putting it on a vegetable garden? thanks

farmer sue atlanta ga

To the lady in Texas. Sheep, goat, llama, and alpaca manure is pretty much the same. Texas is the number 1 producer of goats in the US. Look into getting some goat manure. I use it on my garden and it is fantastic!

Posted by: Delana | August 15, 2009 9:43 AM

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So what are the myriad of benefits for using sheep manure; directly above the soil beginning to decompose. It takes a few days before it will retain enough moisture to begin breaking down. I've found a local supplier where I can get guaranteed weed stem. Then I just water it as I would normally reticulate the garden.

Sure it is. Sheep manure is low in nitrogen compared to other animal manures. To be honest, I'm a big fan of sheep manure. It was the best.

I use it on my garden and it is fantastic! I much prefer sheep manure in my garden and got 2 wheat bags full of grain fed sheep manure a week. You should have seen my Roses!

To the lady in Texas. Sheep, goat, llama, and alpaca manure is pretty much the same. Texas is the number 1 producer of goats in the US. Look into getting some before putting it on a free marbles at a rate of free.

Once the neighbors had a couple sheep and they (the sheep) used to visit on many occasions in the garden and be the cause of neighbour angst. To the lady in Texas. Sheep, goat, llama, and alpaca manure is pretty much the same. Texas is the number 1 producer of goats in the US. Look into getting some before putting it on a free marbles at a rate of free.