

Preparing and Using Biochar

Store biochar in bag or bin until needed.

Sift biochar if large pieces are being retained for cooking.

Activating with compost: Inoculation incorporates the bacteria directly into the biochar before you amend your soil. One method to inoculate it, and the one recommended by Soil Reef Biochar, is to mix biochar with an equal amount of compost and let them meld for two weeks. The bacteria in the moist compost gradually multiply and migrate to their new home.

For use in soil, small pieces under 2.5cm are ideal

1. Large pieces above 2.5cm can be used for bbqs or crushed underfoot for use in soil
2. Pieces under 2.5cm can be used in soil after activation or composting
3. Pieces under 1cm (dust, flakes and chunks) can be used in seed compost or small pots.

Biochar should not be added directly to soil without activation as the charcoal would absorb nutrients from the soil, leaving less available for plants in the current growing season. "Activating biochar involves mixing it with compost or some form of moisture so that it does not absorb nutrients from the soil but helps to add nutrients?"

Options to activate biochar, in order of preference

1. Add to compost bin during composting process
2. Mix with moist finished compost
3. Mix with liquid fertiliser
4. Mix with 50% diluted fresh/bottled urine (shouldn't smell bad)

Options for adding to soil

1. Place in trenches at root depth of the plants. Trenches can be around 1m apart
2. Place in spade depth holes between plants

Place on soil surface and cover with 3cm soil or mulch (Biochar is most effective at the root level (5-6" deep))

3. Use unactivated as slug repellent by adding around plants on soil surface

Options for adding to pots

1. Use biochar at base of pot to improve drainage
2. Mix activated biochar with soil and compost when replanting pots
3. Bury a small amount of compost/biochar in a corner of the pot to avoid disturbing roots of an existing plant
4. Place biochar on top of the soil in a pot to keep the soil moist and to deter slugs.
5. Mix biochar with seed compost when setting seeds in pots