

***Make your own dirt! Start an in-home soil factory...***



...and as you can see, it's not in the least complicated!

This is a great way of putting your fermented Bokashi-ed food waste to use without having to dig holes or mess around with a compost bin. Best of all, it's really quick and easy and you won't get your hands, clothes or shoes dirty.

You'll need a plastic storage box of some kind with a well-fitting lid (doesn't have to be completely airtight). A plastic boat scoop like I've got here is also good to have.

Put a couple of scoops of plain old garden soil in the bottom of the box. Tip in a bucket of fermented Bokashi-ed food from your kitchen. Add a bit more soil and mix and stir a bit so the food gets reasonably coated with soil. Put the lid back on. That's it!

When you have a look in a couple of weeks you'll see there's more soil and less food. Your soil factory is doing its work! The nutrition and carbon in the Bokashi-treated food is being absorbed by the "start-soil" and what you end up with is "super soil", an excellent soil improver to spread around your flower beds, use in planter boxes or outdoor pots, or sprinkle around plants that need a vitamin boost.

You can run your soil factory more or less forever. Just scoop out the soil you need for the garden and leave some in the box to mix with your next Bokashi bucket. If you have too much soil, you can start another box or scoop over some of the ready soil into black garbage sacks to use later — or give to your friends!

Some tips and ideas (and a couple of things to watch out for):

- You can “renovate” the soil from potted plants that have had their day. Just add it to the box! This is also a good way of diluting the soil in your box and adding structure.

- Soil fresh from your soil factory may have a low pH for a week or two, depending on how long it’s been in the box. Experiment until you get used to it. It’s also extremely nutritious, so you might want to mix it with potting mix before planting in it.

- Chances are you’ll get some white mold forming on the top of the soil. GOOD! Just as it is in your Bokashi bucket, that’s a sign that the microbes are doing their work and colonizing the soil. Mix it around if it bothers you, otherwise just leave it.

- Leaves are great! Toss a few handfuls of autumn leaves into your box and watch them disappear. They’re a good resource and good for the soil structure, handy if you don’t have enough garden soil to use in your box.

- Soil like this is nature’s own product. It will last forever! The sooner you get it onto your plants the sooner they can benefit from the nutrition and microlife in it, but otherwise it’s easily stored until spring or whenever you need it.

- Temperature. Warm is good! Not so hot you kill the microbes (keep it under 104 degrees F), and not so cold nothing happens (less than 43 degrees F). In a sunny spot by the kitchen door is good, on the balcony if you live in an apartment, in the cellar by the boiler if you have one. In the wood shed, the laundry, the garage. It will all work, just test and see what suits you best. And it doesn’t matter if your soil factory freezes, the microbes will come back to life again in the spring and carry on their work.

So good luck! And let us know how you get on with your soil factory!