

Five Foods You Can Substitute for Garden Fertilizer

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by [Lindsay Campbell](#), *Modern Farmer*

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If you were raising a human, you'd want to make sure that it was eating properly. The same goes for your garden babies.

Plants thrive on a number of micronutrients, but the three common ingredients found in store bought fertilizer include nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium—otherwise known as NPK.

And all of these essential nutrients can likely be found right in your home. If you don't want to leave your house to purchase plant food, chances are you don't have to.

We've put together a list of five foods likely in your kitchen that you can use instead of making a trip to your garden store for fertilizer.

Coffee Grounds

Coffee grounds contain about two percent nitrogen, 0.06 percent phosphorus, and 0.6 percent potassium by volume. They also contain many micronutrients such as calcium, magnesium, boron, copper, iron, and zinc.

You can sprinkle them about in your soil with a quarter-inch layer and work it in with your hands.

As a bonus, many gardeners say that coffee grounds can act as a pest repellent to snails and slugs. However, there is very little research to prove this.

Egg Shells

Eggshells contain calcium, which plays a role in the strength and thickness of plant cell walls. Broken down egg shells on average contain 39.15 percent calcium, 0.4 percent nitrogen and 0.38 percent magnesium.

You can rinse out your eggshells or let them dry in the sun. You can also create a liquid fertilizer using your shells in a mason jar full of water. After four weeks of sitting in the water, it will be ready to start fertilizing with.

Add one cup of this mixture to one gallon of water and water accordingly around your plants.

For a dry fertilizer, take your dry eggshells and blend or crush them up. Blending the eggshells into a powder will speed up the fertilization process. Whether its powder or tiny shells, sprinkle them on the soil around your plants. We recommend you use 4-5 eggs for each plant you want to fertilize. Mix the shells into the soil and add water.

Milk

Milk contains all three common ingredients found in fertilizer. As we all know, it's also a healthy source of calcium. Researchers have [recently suggested](#) that it can be used for a fertilizer substitute on farms.

To use milk as a fertilizer, combine 50 percent milk or powdered milk with 50 percent water. Pour the mixture around the plant's roots for best results. You can also apply the solution on your plants leaves using a spray bottle.

Fish

Using your fish scraps as a fertilizer will help provide all three common nutrients found in fertilizer. Fish are especially good for a nitrogen boost.

You can grind up your fish parts to make your own fertilizer.

It's recommended that you use a hand grinder or a stick blender as opposed to a kitchen blender. Work this into your soil and bury the chunks of fish at the roots of your plants.

Alternatively, you can make a mixture that contains one part fish, three parts sawdust and one bottle of unsulfured molasses. Put your ingredients into a container with a lid for about two weeks until the fish is broken down. Ensure you are stirring the mixture daily.

When you're ready to use this on your garden, you can use about one tablespoon of your mixture per one gallon of water. You can spray it on your plant's leaves or at the base of plants.

Banana Peels

Banana peels can hold up to 42 percent potassium and up to 25 percent phosphorous. Other beneficial nutrients in the peel include calcium, magnesium and sulfur.

There are a number of ways that banana peels can be used as fertilizer for your garden. You can soak them inside a mason jar and use the water from the jar as a fertilizer.

If you have them inside the jar, make sure your banana peels are fully immersed or else they will turn moldy. Keep the banana peels in the water for about a week. You can use this mixture with five parts water and water your plants how you would normally.

Alternatively you can dry out the peels for a day in the sun and break them up into tiny pieces. Add them to the soil anywhere from the surface to about four inches down.