

**WHERE THERE'S MUCK...**

A question I am regularly asked is "what is the difference between manure and fertiliser" and "is manure good to use?"



Well, with the present scares in the media about toxins contained in some farm animals and subsequently the waste they produce, I still believe manure is great but if you are applying it on land where you plan to cultivate food crops, I would perhaps be a little more careful. Just in case there are toxins in the manure, I would get it from a farmer who has let his manure pile mature for a year or two before he sells it. This may allow any toxins to dissipate over time. I stress the word may because I don't know for sure myself either.

The main difference between manure and fertilisers - to get back to the original point is as follows. Unlike fertilisers, manure contains humus, hormones and other readily available nutrients which to be honest are not really very well understood with regard to their composite makeup. Manure or garden composts are formed as a direct result of bacterial activities where as fertilisers can often be 100% synthetic which is why I often refer to them as 'Artificial'.

Bulky manures, i.e. goat, horse and the full range of cattle animals are often mixed with straw and other materials used for animal bedding. This type needs to be very well rotted before use as it does do our gardens the world of good. Most people who own animals that produce manure don't know how to rot it down into a usable garden product. If you have room in your garden then get some straw based manure as fresh as possible and rot it down yourself. Most stable yards just pile their manure in random heaps so there are layers of rotted and unrotted material mixed up.

If you don't have room to rot some manure down yourself, be sure that the supplier you are using is only giving you 100% rotted material or it won't be ready to use when you get it home. Remember, horses and goats eat almost anything and unless the manure is fully rotted before you bring it home, you may be bringing millions of little stinging nettle seeds with you which are just sat waiting to germinate.

Wood based manure as with most wood based products need to be used with care. Unless they are fully rotted, they will suck out all the goodness in your soil so it can successfully get enough bacteria to finish the rotting process. I suppose you can say if you put too much wood based compost/manure that hasn't fully rotted onto your garden, you would be composting in reverse; as you could end up with worse soil than before you started.

Some turkey and poultry manure are good to use but make sure it is peat or straw based, turkey manure based in wood is not safe. Turkey manure based in peat is the best because the tannins in the peat 'lock up' the nitrogen and potassium in the urine but as it is up to five times stronger than other farmyard manures; use it sparingly. Straw based turkey manure is no stronger than other farmyard manures so use it in the same volumes.

Manure to avoid is pig manure as that is full of all sorts of junk in my opinion, most notably copper. Keep away from battery poultry manures as they are so full of nitrogen and maybe even heavy metals and traces of the drugs given to the birds.

Manures can be used as activators on your garden compost heaps. If you use them in thin layers as you build up your heap, they will help rot things down faster. Pigeon manure is just about the best to use as an activator as it's like rocket fuel and contains huge amounts of ammonia - it is so fierce most people who have pigeons will be willing to give it away and to see the back of it.

A good tip I can give you if you plan to bring some pigeon manure home in your car, is to transport it in plastic bags that are sealable.

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First scatter some gypsum on the contents that will solve the smell problem long enough to get you home without feeling nauseous. When you get home, keep the pigeon material in a container next to you compost heap and, throw some on occasionally as the heap grows. You can scatter some gypsum on each layer of pigeon manure too as the chemical reaction leaves some useful lime deposits as well.

*Happy Gardening*  
**STUART MABBUTT**

**THE TRADITIONS OF EASTER  
A TALK BY CHRISTINE WHILD**

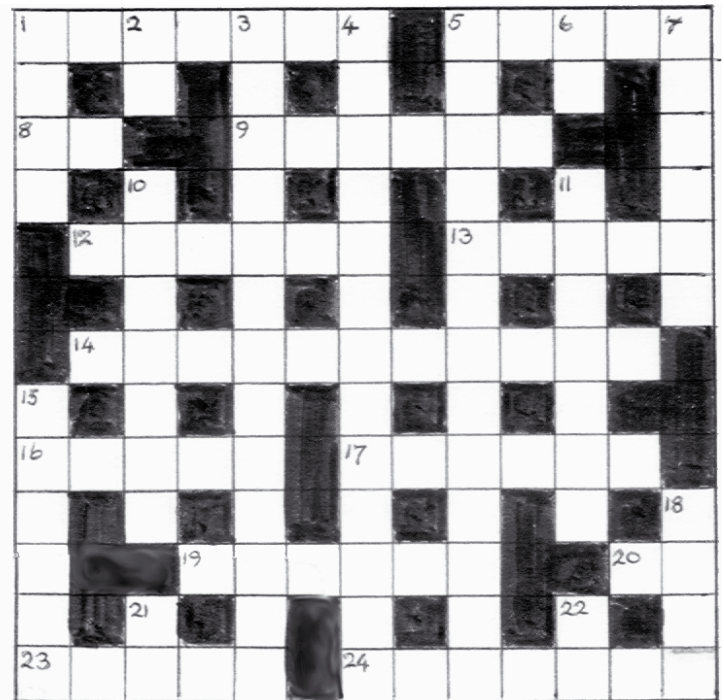
All Saints' Church, Marcham  
7.30pm Friday 20 February



Small sale of decorated eggs  
Simmel cake raffle  
Coffee and biscuits

Retiring collection for Agape, Moldova

**JAN / FEBRUARY CROSSWORD BY ALISA**



I hope you have all had enough time to think up the answers to last month's crossword clues! Apologies for not including the grid, this was due to a technical error by the editor... she forgot to put it in! Answers next month..... fingers crossed **ED**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Plimsoll (3.4)
- 5 Short (5)
- 8 Denman residents (2)
- 9 In the wrong direction (6)
- 12 Ragged imp (6)
- 13 Telephone box (5)
- 14 Fragile intentions (11)
- 15 Indian washerman (5)
- 17 Abrupt (6)
- 19 Hope (6)
- 20 Hospital (2)
- 23 Warning (5)
- 24 Young bird (7)

**DOWN**

- 1 Garment for a don (4)
- 2 Redcaps (2)
- 3 Inventive cartoonist (5.8)
- 4 Putting out (13)
- 5 Oxford district (9.4)
- 6 Poem by Kipling (2)
- 7 Lively (6)
- 10 Liberty (7)
- 11 Plastic token (7)
- 15 Ideas of perfection (6)
- 18 Reptile (4)
- 21 British Rail (2)
- 23 US soldier (2)