

The Marvel of Mulch

Mulching is one of the simplest and most beneficial practices you can use in the garden. Mulch is simply a protective layer of material that is laid on top of your garden soil.

Did you know?

Mulching has many benefits for your garden and the environment including:

- Reduces need for watering by 70%
- Reduces weeds
- Reduces weed-seed germination
- Improves your soil quality
- Reduces rain run-off
- Insulates your soil and adds nutrients
- Reduces compaction
- Creates a natural, healthier (and happier) place to live

There are three types of mulch; organic, living and inorganic. Choose the right mulch for the right job in your garden.



Organic mulch

Grass clippings

- Dry out first and age to kill off any seeds
- Spread thinly (3cm deep) every week or two throughout summer
- Make sure no weedkiller has been used on the grass as it may harm crops



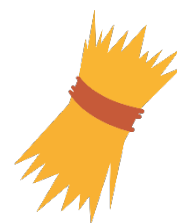
Leaf matter

- Dry the leaves first
- Chop the leaves up with the lawn mower
- Use as a thick, insulating blanket over empty garden beds or around plants
- 7.5–10cm around trees and shrubs
- 5-7.5cm over perennial beds
- Buffers soil temperature
- Suppresses weeds



Straw-based

- Pea straw, lucerne or sugar cane
- Ensure when purchasing they are free from weed seeds
- Straw can be applied quite thickly as it is light and fluffy and water will be able to reach the plants
- Used in vegetable gardens



These materials break down and add organic matter to your soil. Gather the materials that are available locally to you.

Shredded bark or woodchips

- Add a 3-5cm layer
- For use in garden beds with more permanent based plantings
- Coarse material
- Prevents chickens and other animals from moving it around
- Lasts for a couple of years
- Suppresses weed growth

Did you know?



Compost is also a great fertiliser for your garden. Start your own compost at home to further improve your gardens and reduce waste to landfill. Have a look at the composting fact sheet for more information.



Free mulch from Council

Council offers free drop off for garden waste materials at council waste facilities by residents. This is turned into mulch and is available to be collected for free from Council's Waste Management Facilities.



Living mulch

Plants, trees and groundcovers that provide shading and reduce evaporation are considered as living mulch. Other mulch does not need to be applied on top of living mulch.

In-organic mulch

Inorganic mulch includes materials such as gravel or crushed brick, stones and rocks are great for paths or if you're in a fire prone area. However, inorganic mulch does not add nutrients into the soil.

- For use in areas of low light, damp or boggy conditions where it is difficult to grow any plants
- Used as pathways between garden beds



Mulching tips

- ✓ Always remove weeds before laying mulch
- ✓ Apply a granular soil wetter to the surface of the soil before spreading mulch
- ✓ Always water well before and after mulching
- ✓ Try to mulch when soil is wet from rain, or when rain is expected
- ✓ Rejuvenate your soil by adding compost to your gardens before laying mulch
- ✓ Select an appropriate mulch for the use of the area or garden
- ✓ Reduce your mulch building in the winter months to ensure that the soil can warm up to sustain plant growth through the cooler weather
- ✓ For coarser and heavier mulch, ensure a gap between the root of the plant to avoid suffocation

Which mulch do I choose?

It's important that you choose the right mulch for the right job in your garden. Here are a few examples and suggestions:

Vegetable garden (larger plants)

Straw based material

Tip: Apply a 3-5cm layer

Vegetable garden (smaller plants like herbs)

Shredded straw based material

Tip: Spread sporadically instead of one layer to ensure the plants aren't smothered

Tall trees and plants

Shredded bark and wood chips

Tip: leave 5cm circumference around the tree trunk to ensure the mulch doesn't smother them

Areas of low light and reduced plant growth

Inorganic mulch such as gravel or tiles to create a pathway