

Create your own Eden

The Marvel of Mulch



The many benefits of mulch

Mulch is material that covers the soil to stop weed growth and promote healthy plants.

Mulch can be made from a vast range of organic material.

Applied on top of the soil in your garden, organic mulch helps retain nutrients and moisture in the soil.

Mulch makes your garden much healthier by greatly increasing the biological activity in the soil (especially worms and beneficial microbes).

Helps to keep the weeds down. That's less work for you.

Provides nutrients.

Reduces the need for chemical sprays.

Mulching around plants keeps the roots cool in summer and warm in winter and helps maintain moisture.

Less watering.

Mulch is multipurpose. Use it around plants, as a valuable additive to the compost, as an attractive surface for your paths or to provide a safe surface for the children's play area.

Reduces soil erosion and soil compact around plants.

Leaving grass clippings on the lawn saves on expensive fertilisers.



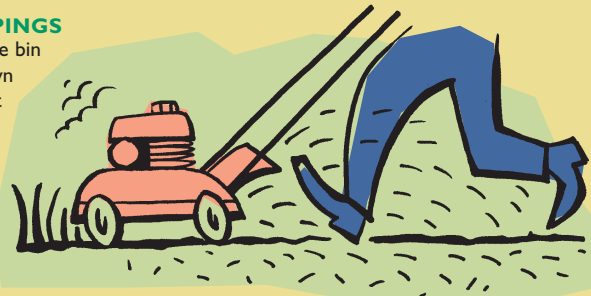
How to make mulch

Making mulch is really simple. Here are a few ideas:

1. USING LAWN CLIPPINGS

Putting lawn clippings in the garbage bin is a real waste of a natural garden wonder. Lawn clippings are rich in nitrogen, an important plant fertiliser. To make the most of your lawn clippings:

- * Leave them on the lawn when you mow, feeding the lawn and making it healthier. You can use your regular lawn mower or purchase a mulching mower.
- * Use lawn clippings as mulch around annual flower and vegetable plants.



2. USING GARDEN PRUNINGS

It's tempting to place small twigs, branches and leafy cuttings into the garbage bin. They are often too big for the compost bin and take a long time to break down. Well, think again. It's easy to turn garden prunings into mulch, and here's how:

- * Arrange twigs, thin branches and leafy material in a long row and use the lawn mower to shred them.
- * For larger branches, borrow or buy a small shredder.



3. USING COMPOST

By composting your food and garden wastes you can create a free source of nutrients for seedlings, plants, shrubs and trees. Compost can be used for covering seeds, for mulching around seedlings and young plants. Compost decays quickly so the nutrients are readily available to your plants and soil. Call 1800 225 587 to get your 'Easy Composting Guide' to find out more about making compost.



4. USING BOUGHT MULCHES

There are many different types of mulches that can be bought either in bags or in bulk. Straw, hay, wood and bark chips can be easily purchased. They can be used in a myriad of ways. Some purchased mulches are used specifically for landscaping. Wood chip mulches are often used as an attractive feature for garden paths. Wood chips can also be used under children's play equipment to soften falls.



Some tips for making mulch



WEED FREE MULCH

The most important tip for making mulch is to take care with selecting the organic materials being used. It is best not to include weeds, seeding plants and certain leaves in your mulch mix. (Eucalyptus and Camphor Laurel leaves contain substances that inhibit plant growth for 3-4 weeks when fresh.) These are best composted.

KILLER MULCH

Avoid making mulch with organic materials that have been exposed to weed killer or pesticides as the mulch may harm your plants or soil.



MATURE MULCH

Mulching with fresh woody material such as wood chips and bark can rob the soil of nitrogen. Be sure to let mulches mature for a few weeks before applying around plants.

Try mixing in some nitrogen containing material like compost, worm castings or animal manures (e.g. cows or chooks). A good recipe is to add one part nitrogen-rich material to ten parts mulch.

COLLAR YOUR MULCH

When mulching around trees and plants with woody mulch, be sure to leave some space (a 'collar') between the bark or stem and the mulch. This will prevent making an environment that may encourage disease.



Mulch can be made from common organic items found around the garden or the kitchen, such as:



LEAVES

Leaves are a decorative free mulch which provide fibrous organic material to the soil.

GRASS CLIPPINGS

Grass clippings contain nitrogen and potash and rot down quickly. Great for seedlings!



SHREDDED GARDEN PRUNINGS

Shredded garden prunings make a terrific looking leaf mulch around larger plants and shrubs.

STRAW

Straw can be bought and used as mulch around vegetable plants and seedlings.



SEAWEED

Seaweed has many advantages as a mulch – it's seed free, doesn't transfer plant diseases and looks good. It's also high in minerals and potash.

NEWSPAPER

Soiled newspaper that can't go in the recycling bin can be used as mulch. Great for paths.



WOOD OR BARK CHIPS

Wood chips can be made or purchased. They are often used in landscaping.



COMPOST

Compost is an all-round wonder for the garden. It decays quickly as a mulch and provides nutrients and trace elements to plants and soil.



LIVING MULCH

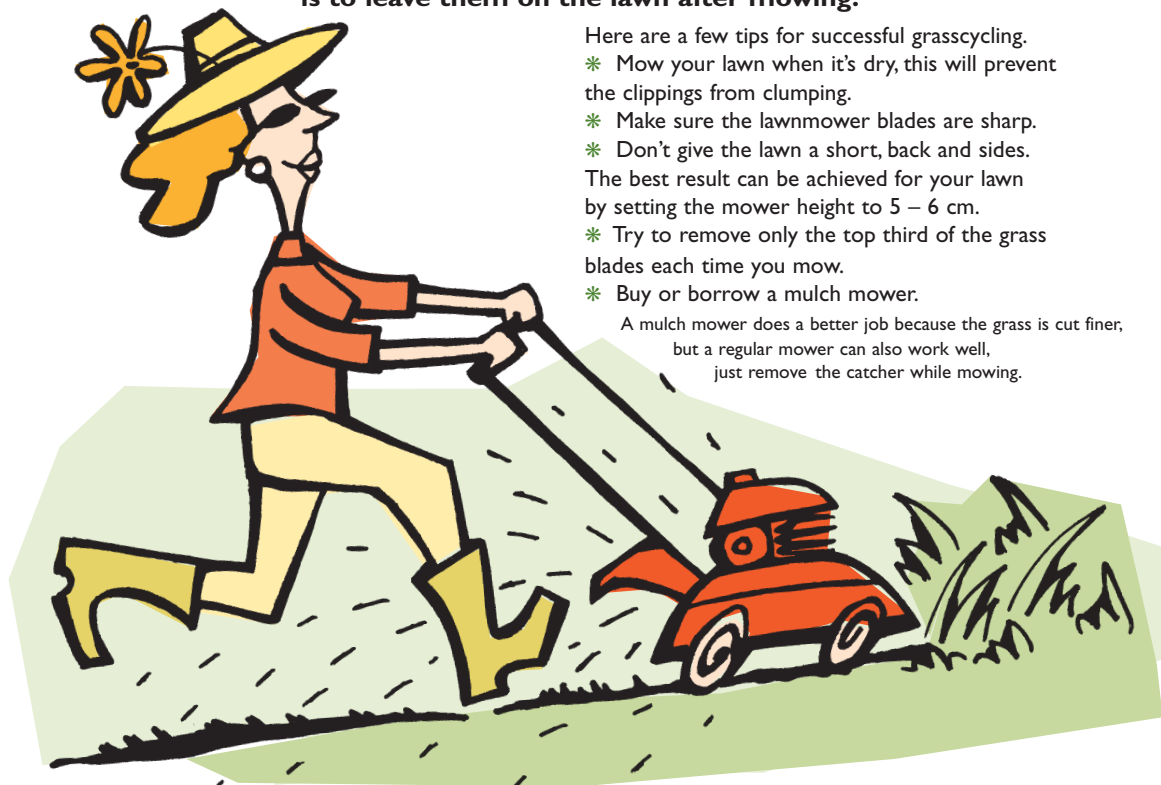
Try ground cover plants as carpet mulches. Herbs such as Corsican Mint (*Mentha requenii*) or Wild Thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*) or Kidney Weed (*Dichondra repens*) make great ground covers.



Try and increase the diversity of mulches you use on your gardens. Variety is the spice of life.

Go grasscycling!

The cheapest and easiest way to recycle your lawn clippings is to leave them on the lawn after mowing.



Here are a few tips for successful grasscycling.

- * Mow your lawn when it's dry, this will prevent the clippings from clumping.
 - * Make sure the lawnmower blades are sharp.
 - * Don't give the lawn a short, back and sides.
- The best result can be achieved for your lawn by setting the mower height to 5 – 6 cm.
- * Try to remove only the top third of the grass blades each time you mow.
 - * Buy or borrow a mulch mower.

A mulch mower does a better job because the grass is cut finer, but a regular mower can also work well, just remove the catcher while mowing.

Where to get more information about mulching

Contact your local council or Resource NSW to find out more about mulching, composting and waste reduction.

There are many good publications on mulching and composting. Try your local library or the NSW EPA. Phone 131 555.



RESOURCE^{NSW}
Phone 1800 225 587
www.resource.nsw.gov.au

Printed on recycled paper

OUR ENVIRONMENT
it's a living thing
A NSW GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE