



Spreading mulch on the soil in your garden is one of the nicest things you can do for your plants, and it looks great, too! Mulch is a layer of material put on top of bare soil to moderate soil temperatures, retain moisture, and suppress weeds.

Organic mulches improve soil fertility and build good tilth. Some examples are tree leaves, garden compost, grass clippings, chipped wood or bark, pine needles, seed or nut hulls, aged manure, and even seaweed. Experiment, compare, and decide what you like best.

If your garden is large, buy in bulk for substantial savings. Many companies will deliver. Spread a tarp on the ground and have the pile of mulch dumped onto the tarp. This makes for easier cleanup when you're done mulching.



Mulch a new bed right after you set out the plants, and then at least once a year thereafter to maintain a depth of 2-3 inches. It's easiest to do this in the winter or early spring when perennials are dormant and their tops are cut down. Wait til the ground freezes in the winter before applying mulch. If you wait too late in spring, you have to work carefully around the tender, emerging growth.

Spread the mulch evenly around the flowerbed. Do so by dumping it directly out of the bag, by shovel, or with a garden fork. In tighter areas, or around smaller plants, spread it by hand from a bucket.

Cover the soil between plants but be careful not to pile mulch against the stems or over the crowns of the plants themselves. If you accidentally dump some mulch on a plant, use your hands to pull it away.

Too much mulch can cause rots, odors, host insect and rodents, and cause nutrient imbalances in the soil. A layer 2-3" deep is plenty. Over time, the layer of mulch disappears. Earthworms, freeze/thaw cycles, and other natural processes help to incorporate it into your soil. Compensate by topping it off with a new layer when needed.