

Sheet Mulching 101

Sheet mulching is a method of 'removing' your lawn without actually digging it up. Compared to digging up a lawn, it is much easier, cheaper and better for the soil. Essentially it is a method to decompose the lawn in place, and improve the soil. Sheet mulching is like making lasagna, there are many recipes, but the goal is always to decompose the lawn and create a quality planting area. Just follow these steps:

Materials Needed

- One-Inch Layer of Compost or other Organic Soil Amendment
- Single Layer of Cardboard
- Three-Inch Layer of Mulch (use shredded mini mulch, not bark chips or guerilla hair)

Preparation Steps

1. Measure the lawn area that you want to sheet mulch. You'll need to know how many square feet so you can get the right amount of materials. (see below)
2. If needed, mow the lawn as short as possible and leave the clippings where they fall. This may be the last time you will need your lawn mower. ☺
3. A day or two before you start, water the lawn sufficiently to get the first few inches of soil wet. It doesn't matter if the lawn is green or brown.
4. If your lawn is adjacent to pavement, you will need to dig up a 12-inch wide x 2-inch deep strip of the lawn along the pavement. This will create a low point along the pavement so the mulch will not spill out. Now you are ready to sheet mulch!

Sheet Mulch Steps

1. Add one-inch (1") layer of compost or other organic soil amendment over the lawn and rake it evenly.
2. Install cardboard over the entire area. Use a double layer for bermuda grass. Overlap the edges, like roof tiles so there are no light can get through. Do not use weed fabric or plastic.
3. Add three-inch (3") layer of mulch on top of the cardboard. We recommend shredded mini mulch. Don't use bark chips or guerilla hair. You are finished! Your old lawn will no longer be able to get any sunlight and will therefore not grow much. If some does pop up, just pull it.

How Long Before Planting?

Ideally, it is a good idea to let the sheet mulch "cook" for a month or more before planting. This allows the decomposition to get started and the layers will become more compact. However if you want to plant sooner it can be done, but be aware you will need to dig through the old lawn.

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Next Steps

While the sheet mulching is working, you can design your new landscape and drip system. You will plant directly through the layers into the soil below, mixing the native soil, compost/soil amendment and mini mulch into each planting hole. The drip system will be installed on top. Finally, you will add a 2" to 3" layer of course mulch on top.

How Much Material Will You Need?

Compost and Mulch are best purchased in bulk. Local suppliers will deliver them or you can pick up with a truck. When you purchase in bulk, it is sold by the cubic yard. One cubic yard = 27 cubic feet. Therefore to determine how many cubic yards you need:

- For a 1" Layer = (Square Feet of Lawn) X (0.083)/ 27 = Number of cubic yards
- For a 3" Layer = (Square Feet of Lawn) X (0.25)/ 27 = Number of cubic yards

Where to get Cardboard?

Plain cardboard boxes can be obtained from many businesses such as bike shops, big box membership stores, furniture stores, auto stores, and appliance stores. You will need enough to cover the area PLUS more for all the overlaps. You can also purchase rolls of cardboard at:

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| Boxes for Moving & Storage 995 Detroit Ave., Unit A Concord, CA (925) 686-6204 | Monahan Paper Company 175 2nd Street Oakland, CA (510) 835-4670 | The Urban Farmer Store 2121 San Joaquin St. Richmond, CA (510) 524-1604 | Oakland Packaging 3200 Regatta Blvd. Unit F Richmond, CA (510) 307-4242 |
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Step by Step Photos



Remove 12" wide x 2" deep strip of lawn adjacent pavement.



Add a 1" layer of soil amendment on top of lawn.



Roll cardboard over top of soil amendment



Add 3" layer of fine mulch on top