



Food Stamp Nutrition Education Youth Program

UC Cooperative Extension- Alameda County

What Is Sheet Mulching?

Sheet mulching, known as lawn lasagna, is a cold compost process in which the soil is systematically covered to allow soil's organic matter (SOM) to build up while suppressing weeds.

Sheet mulching is a type of mulch which mimics natural soil building conditions found in forest floors. By creating different layers of organic matter on the soil's surface, the soil is enriched in organic material, increasing moisture capacity and retention. To create a sheet mulch is like creating a lasagna- in layers laid on top of each other and repeated in pattern. If you sheet mulch in the Fall, the mulch will break down just in time for Spring planting season.

Sheet Mulching Lasagna Recipe

Ingredients

Soil Amendment-compost, manure, green manure (from cover crops), etc.

Sheet- Bundles of soy-based black and white newspaper, cardboard preferably from the U.S.

Mulch- woodchips, crop hulls, straw, etc.

Preparation

You may wish to water the soil the day before you mulch to encourage weed seed germination which subsequently will be buried. Watering also encourages soil moisture and microbial activity to accelerate the composting process.

Directions

STEP 1: Add a layer of your choice of soil amendment. Do not use diseased plants as green manure in any small/cold composting system as it may promote the disease.
depth:1-2 inches.

What does it do? This is great long term investment into soil fertility.

Note: Water the layer a bit to moisten, or if dry, to saturate.

STEP 2: Add a physical barrier covering area completely by overlapping your materials. Work around the crowns of established plants by leaving 10 inches around them uncovered to avoid any rotting.

depth- 1/2 inch, 6-8 sheets of newspaper, or 1-2 sheets of cardboard.

What does it do? Since weed seeds need water, sunlight, and soil disturbance to provide air exchange for germinating, a physical barrier will prevent weed seeds from establishing by limiting their access to sunlight. It also stabilizes the air exchange between upper and lower soil levels.

Note: Water the layer a bit to moisten, or if dry, to saturate.



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STEP 3: Add another thin layer of compost.

depth: 1-2 inches

What does it do? Covers the newspaper and provides additional SOM and other nutrients for future planting.

Note: Water the layer a bit to moisten, or if dry, to saturate.

STEP 4: Mulch Top Off Layer Add wood chips, weed-free straw, leaves, or other plant matter.

depth: 2 inches

What does it do? Buffers the soil temperature from extreme weather conditions such as freezing the soil surface. In dry hot days, this layer retains water that would otherwise evaporate into the atmosphere, otherwise calling for frequent watering. This layer also hosts garden decomposers such as insects and fungi which break down the physical barrier to be worked into the soil over time.

**Quick and
Easy Recipe
Optional for Weed
Suppression**

To suppress weeds for pathways and/or under raised beds, apply Steps 2 and 4 to desired areas.

TIP

Make a hole past the sheet layer to plant over sheet mulch.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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