

Sheet Mulching 101

Sheet mulching is one of the easiest ways to convert a lawn to a water-wise garden. Compared to physically removing the old lawn, sheet mulching is less work, less expensive and doesn't involve the use of machinery or toxic chemicals. It is a process of composting your lawn in place. Over time, sheet mulching improves the quality of the soil and provides a welcome environment for beneficial insects, worms, and micro-organisms. Getting started is easy. Just follow these 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. ⁽¹⁾
2. Water the lawn sufficiently to get the first 4-6 inches of soil wet. One or two normal irrigation days should do it. Water at least 24 hours in advance of mowing.
3. 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. 😊
4. If your lawn is adjacent to pavement, you may want to remove a 12" wide strip of the lawn along the pavement. This will keep the sheet-mulching layers from overflowing onto the pavement. Do this with a shovel getting down approximately two to three inches (2"-3").
5. If the lawn is brown or not so lush you will want to add up to a two-inch (2") layer of compost (soil amendment), directly on top of the old lawn and rake it in. The green lawn blades and compost will provide nutrients to help decompose the lawn. Water the entire area until the water soaks down to the lawn. This will get the composting process going.
6. Install a layer of cardboard over the entire area. Overlap each row by 6 inches. Rolls of corrugated cardboard can be purchased for this purpose. Other options include: using large flattened cardboard boxes (remove all wrapping tape) or ten (10) layers of newspaper. The cardboard will smother the lawn and any weeds. Do NOT use any type of permanent barrier such as plastic or weed fabric.
7. Add a two inch (2") layer of mulch (wood chips) on top of the cardboard, as the final layer. This layer along with the cardboard will keep the mowed lawn/compost from drying out so that the lawn can decompose.
8. In the dry summer time check under the cardboard once a month and if dry, water to keep the composting process going. Wait about three months before planting to ensure the lawn is both dead and composted before planting.

⁽¹⁾ How Much Will You Need?

For every inch of depth to cover a 10' x 10' area (100 square feet), you will need 0.3 cubic yards (8 cubic feet). It takes 27 cubic feet to make one cubic yard. You may want a landscape supply center to deliver bulk quantities to save time and effort. Visit www.cwater.com/consERVE ~~for discount mulch coupons you can use.~~

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2. Water and mow the lawn



3. Remove a 12" wide strip of the lawn down 3" below the adjacent pavement.



4. Add a 2" layer of compost on top of a dry lawn.



4. Rake the compost evenly over the lawn.



5. Install a layer of cardboard on top of the compost



6. Add a 2" layer of mulch on top of the cardboard.



Sheet Mulching Completed