

Mulching to save water and cool the earth

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Mulch is a layer of material added to bare soil and around plants. It is one of the simplest and cheapest climate actions you can do in your garden or community space.

How mulches help

Adding mulch mimics how plants naturally build a protective layer around them by dropping their old leaves and seed cases.

Mulch slows the flow of rain so it soaks into the soil rather than running off the surface and causing floods.

Mulch keeps the soil cool and reduces how much water evaporates from the surface on a warm day.

Mulch reduces weeds and looks good too.

Natural materials for mulch

Bark and wood chippings

Chopped bark is familiar, long-lasting and attractive. It is easy to source from a garden centre and is sometimes available free following tree work. It is not the cheapest option but it lasts longer than leaves and grass clippings and doesn't need regular attention.



Grass clippings

A cheap and easy option for using material you can collect yourself. Both cutting and mulching are best done when the grass is dry. Clippings can form sodden mats which may need to be loosened and they will need regular topping up.



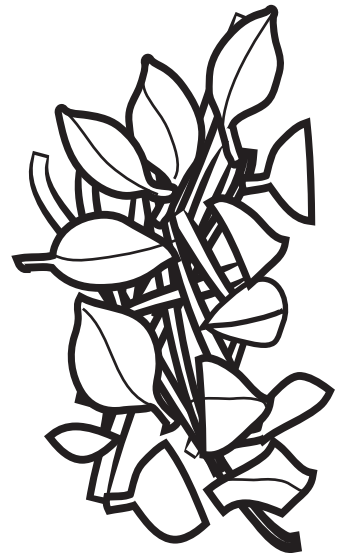
Fallen leaves

Collecting and spreading fallen leaves is as simple and cheap as it gets. It makes use of a natural material that is often treated as waste. Leaves can pack into solid layers which need loosening up. They will rot down over time and will need regular topping up.



Chop and drop

Simply cutting plant trimmings and dropping them on the ground to form a layer of mulch. It saves the need to remove trimmings and returns the nutrients back to the plants. It is important to avoid ones that regrow from small pieces, such as bramble, and it needs topping up.



Top tips for mulching

- Make sure the soil is moist before you cover it with mulch; water it first if the soil is dry.
- Remove perennial weeds because they will grow through the mulch. Most annual weeds will be shaded out by the mulch, or easily removed after it is laid.
- Add a layer of mulch to a depth of at least 5cm. It can be deeper although there is more risk of leaves and clippings forming packed, airless layers lower down.
- Leave a small gap around the trunk or stem of trees or shrubs and spread the mulch out to at least as wide as the canopy.
- Check the mulch from time to time to loosen any packed layers and to see if it needs topping up.
- Try different types of mulch to find the ones that work best for your space.

Ideas for collective mulching

- Got too many clippings or leaves to use yourself? Offer them to other people who might be glad of the resource.
- Bulk buy mulch and share between friends or a local community group. You could help each other with laying the mulch, making it cheaper and more fun for everyone.
- Talk to the local council to see if they provide free or cheap mulch from tree work.
- Connect with your local environment group - or set one up - and encourage greater use of mulching as a climate action in your local area.

Scan the QR code to find out more and get involved.



Sensory Trust



sensorytrust.org.uk/projects/collective-climate-repair

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