



The official lawn color of 2014.

There's a Drought On. Turn the Water Off.

What is Sheet Mulching?

Sheet mulching is a simple technique for converting lawn to a low water use garden and nurturing the soil. It is a way to remove your lawn without having to dig it out or use chemicals to kill it. Sheet mulching can:

- **Suppress weed growth**
- **Reduce labor and maintenance costs since grass is composted in place**
- **Improve nutrient and water retention in the soil**
- **Encourage favorable soil microbial activity and increase the number of worms in the soil**
- **Enhance soil structure**
- **Improve plant vigor and health, often leading to improved resistance to pests and diseases**



How-To Steps

1. Cut the grass as low as you can. Leave the grass clippings in place. At this point, you can add compost directly on top of the lawn if you feel like your garden would benefit from this.
2. Cut directly into the grass and plant larger plants (5 gallons and up) into the ground.
3. Add a layer of cardboard or newspaper on top of the lawn. No plastic. It is important that the layers overlap in order to block out all of the available light.
4. Wet the cardboard or newspaper layer with water. This will aid decomposition and hold the layer in place.
5. Layer soil and/or compost on top of the wet layer. At this point, the layers will be several inches thick, however over time, as the cardboard and grass decomposes, the layers will settle and flatten.
6. Plant smaller plants directly into the soil and/or compost layer.
7. Mulch around the plants. This will deter any weeds from sprouting, decrease soil temperature and increase the moisture holding capacity of the soil.
8. Ensure that the root crowns of your plants are not in contact with the compost or mulch.

Need Help? Qualified Water Efficient Landscapers (QWEL) are local professionals that are trained in water efficient landscape design and maintenance. A list of QWEL certified professionals can be found at www.qwel.net.

Materials

You can find free cardboard for sheet mulching at bike stores, appliance stores and the landfill (be sure to remove tape and staples). Other locations for supplies include:

- **Grab N' Grow, Santa Rosa, (707) 575-7275. Offers recycled cardboard rolls, mulch and compost.**
- **Northbay Paper & Packaging, Petaluma, (707) 778-5170. Offers recycled cardboard rolls.**
- **Sonoma Compost, Petaluma, (707) 664-9113. Offers organic mulch, and compost.**
- **Marin Landscape Materials, Novato, (415) 897-1337. Offers bark and hardscape materials.**

This is not a comprehensive list of locations. Check your local listings for other locations.



Helpful Tips

- Bevel the edges of the grass to eliminate the spread of mulch beyond the edges of your new garden. This is especially important because sheet mulching increases the height of the garden by several inches (although it does compress over time).
- Large slopes are not ideal locations to sheet mulch since the mulch will tend to drift down the slope.
- The depth of mulch depends on the size of the chip. Smaller sized chips should not exceed one to two inches deep. Larger chips are best applied up to three or four inches. Shredded mulch varieties are not recommended.
- If using newspaper do not use any sections with glossy print. If using cardboard, make sure to remove all staples and tape.
- Some people prefer to wait to plant until the layers have decomposed for several months. However, it is fine to plant into the layers immediately.