

Facts about Sheet Mulching

Sheet mulching is a layered **mulch** system that nurtures the soil and replaces existing lawns or other vegetation, eliminating the need to remove unwanted plant material. The first layer is a biodegradable weed barrier usually cardboard or multiple layers of newspaper placed directly on the ground.

Sheet mulching is a quick and easy way to make an instant raised garden bed.

How to make Sheet Mulching

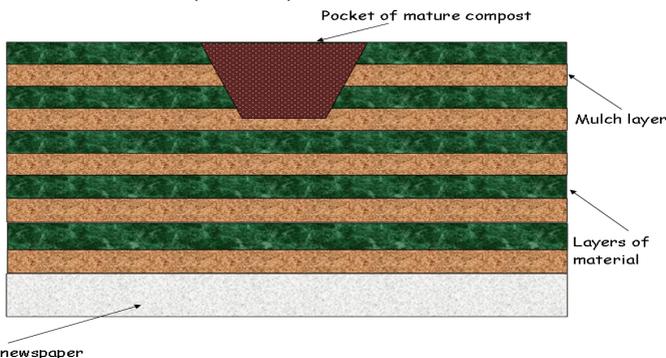
Lay thick newspapers or a layer of carpet underlay or wool carpet on an area and place bed inside the edge of the paper. The paper layer helps to suppress weeds.

Establish the edge of the bed by putting down a retaining material such as sleepers, bricks, rocks, poly-pipe. Put the retaining material inside from the edge of the paper to give a buffer zone for invading weeds. Try not to have treated wood or check on treatment chemicals to see if any potentially toxic. Sprinkle with bentonite clay (clumping kitty litter) to help water holding capacity.

The idea is to have layers of 'carbon' and 'nitrogen' rich materials, well watered in to simulate a compost pile. Don't use food scraps as it may attract vermin.

Carbon (Browns) 5 of these items below	Nitrogen (Greens) To 1 of these items
Straw Brown leaves Newspaper Dry grass Weeds	Green grass clippings Green leaves Manure Coffee grounds Spent plants

Finish with a layer of nitrogen rich material before a thick layer of mulch. The bed needs to be about 40 cm high. A good handful of rock dust sprinkled over the bed adds minerals, this can be purchased from some garden centres. The raised bed will heat up as it composts down and after about 3 months will be rich rotted compost material. However, the beds can be planted in immediately, if a small well is made in the bed and a good handful of mature compost or soil mix is used in the hole. The plants or seeds are then placed in this buffer area and by the time the roots have grown out into the composting layers the bed will be cool and not burn the roots (see below).



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