



Sustainable Gardening in Eugene

Using compost and mulch for a thriving garden

How to use resources wisely while gardening with the use of compost and mulch.

Waste Prevention

City of Eugene
Planning and Development
99 West 10th Ave.
Eugene, OR 97401

Contact:

WastePrevention@ci.eugene.or.us

Everyone wins when sustainable gardening methods are used. From the tiniest microorganism, to the tallest fir tree, simply put, everyone is fed, and nothing is wasted. Urban landscapes require sufficient amounts of water, fertilizer, and organic amendments to thrive. Use compost and mulch to create a low impact landscape and garden that thrives on less water and fertilizer while making the best use of urban resources.

Make and Use Compost



Soil consists of minerals, organic matter, water and air. Soil without sufficient organic matter will compact and make it difficult for plants to thrive. With the addition of 2-5% organic matter in the form of compost, soils are able to support beneficial microbial and earthworm populations, recycle nutrients, accept and store water, and provide air space for growing roots. Well-amended soil will provide more of the nutrients, air, and water that plants need, which will reduce water and fertilizer requirements throughout the year.



Mulching and composting by the seasons

Spring - Mulch after the soil has warmed to 60 degrees with 1-2 inches to suppress weeds. Compost and grasscycle lawn clippings, top dress with compost or add compost to each planting hole.

Summer - Mulch to reduce evapotranspiration and to suppress weed growth. Mulch keeps root systems cool, helping landscapes survive scorching summer suns.



Fall - Mulch to protect from freezing, protect soil from raindrop compaction, smother winter weeds. Remember to collect and save leaves. Work in organic matter as plants are pulled. Compost fall garden debris but avoid diseased plants and weed seeds.

Winter - Mulch to protect plant roots from winter heaving and to protect soil from compaction and leaching rains. Make compost! Add nitrogen rich materials like coffee grounds, food waste, and alfalfa to bring heat to a compost pile during cold winter months. Composting is a year round activity, but especially in winter when plant growth slows, and more time is available for soil building activities.



Converting lawn to garden

With a little planning, creating sheet compost or “lasagna gardening” is one of the easiest ways to convert a lawn into a bountiful garden. Small sections of lawn can be converted over time using this method. These sections will be ready to plant within 6 months and sometimes sooner.



Step One

Start by gathering materials and have them all on hand before beginning including: newspaper/cardboard to cover the grass, leaves, wood chips and straw to layer with food waste, grass clippings, and coffee grounds. Mow the lawn as short as possible.

Step Two

Cover the lawn with several layers of newspaper or a single sheet of cardboard, wetting the paper to keep it from flying away. Cover the paper with leaves, and then alternate thin leaf layers with thin layers of food scraps, grass clippings, and/or coffee grounds.

Step Three

Always finish by covering any visible food waste with a thick layer of leaves, wood chips, or straw to deter pests. If rodents are an issue in your neighborhood, avoid using food scraps that will attract them and stick with grass clippings and coffee grounds. To deter pests, consider composting food waste in a compost bin first, then layer the finished compost with leaves.

Mulch

Leaves and wood chips make great mulch and are an abundant free urban resource available seasonally. Mulches protect soil from compaction, reduce weed growth, and provide food resources for beneficial soil microbes. Mulches also reduce evapotranspiration from the soil surface by as much as 10-50%, keeping moisture levels consistent around plant roots and reducing water needs in your landscape.

How Much Mulch?

Maintain 2-3 inches annually with the mulch of your choice!

For More Information:

OSU Extension Service in Lane County Master Gardener Compost Specialists are available to talk compost with you! Call 541-344-0265 Monday-Thursday 10am-1pm or 2-5pm or visit www.eugenerecycles.org.

City of Eugene *Waste Prevention & Green Building Program*

Promoting sustainable practices in waste prevention and the built environment