



Dancing Raven Design

Edible Garden Consultation and Design

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Sheet Mulching

Sheet mulching is an excellent way to create a new planting bed or pathway. For a planting area, it's best to start in the Fall, but anytime is better than dealing with more and more weeds or a water-hogging lawn!

- Determine where you want your new bed or path
 - A heavy rope is good for “drawing” practice shapes—it’s more flexible than a garden hose.
- If you’re mulching over lawn, you’ll need some kind of edging to keep the grass from growing back into the new area. Bricks, concrete pavers and commercial edging all work. Wider and deeper barriers slow the grass longer than the narrow plastic edging. You won’t need edging if you’re building a raised bed with solid walls.
- Dig a trench for your edging along the outline of the new bed/path.
- If the soil is very compacted, use a gardenfork or broadfork to break it up—no need to till.
- Water the soil well.
- If you’re building a raised bed, put up the walls.
- On very poor soil that you’ll be planting, apply a 1”-2” layer of good compost, manure or other rich organic matter. Wet thoroughly.
- Cover every inch of the area with 1-2 layers of cardboard (if you’re mulching in Summer or Fall and won’t be planting until Spring) or 8-10 layers of newspaper (not the colored shiny pages.) Wet thoroughly.
- Use your edging material to help hold down/contain the cardboard or newspaper.
- For paths, apply 4”-6” of woody mulch, either arborist chips or bark. For planting beds, use 2”-4” of good quality compost or fill the bed with new soil to plant immediately. Layers of straw, chopped up vegetable matter, grass clippings and dairy or goat manures are great, too. Just top it all off with the compost. You can then plant a cover crop or apply corn gluten to reduce germination of any blown-in weed seeds.

Some persistent weeds may make their way through the mulch layers, but they will be weakened and can be easily pulled.

Refresh the woody mulch in paths every couple of years as needed.