



How to use mulch

SKILL LEVEL: ■■■■■

TIME OF YEAR: NOVEMBER–MARCH

WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY: Mulch provides cover for small animals. As it breaks down, it enriches the soil and nourishes plants and animals. These, in turn, encourage more wildlife into your garden.

CLIMATE-FRIENDLY: Adding a thick layer of organic mulch to your soil is one of the easiest and most useful jobs you can do to reduce the severity of climate change. It regulates soil temperature, reduces the need to water, suppresses weeds and helps to prevent soil erosion.

WHERE TO BUY: Ideally, make your own. Alternatively, ask for some at your local stables, or buy some from a good independent garden centre (check for colour and consistency to ensure it is well rotted).

GARDEN FOR A LIVING LONDON

As our climate changes, gardens are becoming even more vital to wildlife and people.

They can provide shade, absorb carbon, soak up flood water and help to cool buildings. A well managed network of gardens stretching across the capital would also help wildlife to move more freely and adapt to climate change.

London Wildlife Trust's 'Garden for a Living London' campaign is asking Londoners to do one thing to create a wildlife and climate friendly garden. This 'How to' guide shows how to use mulch. Follow the simple tips and get your garden working to help our city and its wildlife cope with climate change.

For more information on our campaign and to pledge your support visit www.wildlondon.org.uk/gardening

Mulching made simple

What can I use?

The best mulch comes from well-rotted, natural and organic material because this will enrich and protect the soil at the same time. You could use well-rotted horse manure, garden compost or leaf mould.

What should it look like?

Well-rotted compost should:

- Be a rich colour
- Crumble easily when handled
- Be moist but not too wet

You shouldn't be able to identify what mulch was made from. If you can, it has not rotted down enough and may leach nutrients from the soil and burn tender plants.

When should I mulch?

The best time is when the soil is fairly wet in late autumn and again in spring. If you can only mulch once, do it in spring to prepare your soil for a dry summer.

How to do it

1. Fork in or rake off any excess mulch from the previous season that has not broken down into the soil.
2. If dry, first use a watering can to water the ground.
3. Spread the mulch in a layer 5-10cm thick around plants and trees.
4. Make sure you leave a mulch-free gap of 5cm around trees and larger stems.
5. Don't add mulch on top of emerging growth and tender new seedlings.

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