



MULCHING

Mulching and History

The Aztec cosmology had many heavens, including one that was filled with mulch and decaying vegetation. Originally, the Aztecs were refugees and had very little land. They had to invent a way to feed themselves. Their farmers developed a system for building soils with lake mud and mulch. Aztec agriculture gave the World: chillies, chocolate, and corn.

The Conquistadors did not understand agriculture well. Many of them were peasants who had been removed from the land, so the land could be used for producing sheep for wool. This ultimately devastated Spanish subsistence agriculture, as sheep can deplete the land. Instead of creating soils, like the Aztecs, the Conquistadors created desertification conditions.

Soils need organic matter to thrive because it is their food!

What is Mulching?

Mulching recreates the conditions found in the most productive natural ecosystems. Mulch is, simply, decaying vegetable matter. Layers of plant material are placed on top of the soil and around the plants that are wanted. The mulches prevent weeds from growing up from the soil. Mulch also feeds your plants, the animals, fungi, and plants that live in the soil. It also retains soil moisture, etc. Any form of plant matter can be used for mulching, so long as it has no toxin contamination.



Mulch is used in sophisticated agriculture because it can:

- provide nutrients.
- retain soil moisture.
- suppress weeds.
- feed and condition the soil.
- mulch can give some protection from frost by heat transfer from decomposition and evaporation.
- prevent rain water run-off.

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Types of Mulch

Many different mulches can be used:

- straw of any kind
- silage
- cut grass
- wood chips (don't dig them in or they can rob nitrogen)
- bark
- compost
- cardboard
- seaweed
- the cleanings of other animals, such as chickens/rabbits/donkeys.
- Sheeps wool



Some mulches need to be left to rot down before they are applied!

If the bed is not to be used for a few months, then the mulch can be applied on top of a layer of wet cardboard or newspaper. By the time the break-down is under way, the mulch will have matured enough to not rob nitrogen from the soil or burn any plants that you are mulching around.

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When to Mulch

Mulches can be left on permanently, as they can protect the soil. It is possible to raise many plants in pots and plant these out through the mulch later. Alternatively, it is possible to plant seed in rows and then hoe between the rows until the plants are big enough to grow over the mulch.

If you leave thickly mulched soil, with no crop growing out of it, over the winter you can cause water pollution. This is called Eutrophication, which can run into nearby streams and pollute water sources. Be sure to cover over outside mulches, in the winter or rainy season!

How Much Mulch?

Some plants don't like mulches. Most herbs grow best with little fertiliser, so mulches should be avoided. Even a thin layer of mulch can stop weeds. Thick layers are a good choice for potatoes.

Mushrooms in Mulch

Some kinds of mushroom will grow in mulches, including portobello mushrooms. These can be found at the best spore suppliers. The mushrooms don't harm the plants. Many kinds of mushroom grow on wood so wood chips make a good mulch for multi purpose mulching.

To plant mushrooms all you need is some spawn. Small amounts of spawn placed into the damp mulch, at regular intervals, is all it takes.



Related Videos & Websites

- ⇒ [Organic Mulch Use](#) ⇐
- ⇒ [Understanding Mulch](#) ⇐
- ⇒ [Mushrooms in Mulch](#) ⇐

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