

Sheet mulching/Lasagna Garden

Here's what you will need:

- Cardboard or newspaper
- Manure, compost or other nitrogen-rich material (i.e. fresh lawn or plant clippings)
- Straw, mulch, dried leaves, wood chips or other carbon-rich material
- More Compost
- Optional: other additives to improve your soil fertility such as soft rock phosphate, glacial rock dust, organic fertilizer, bone meal.

Step 1: Site plus cardboard

Sheet mulching begins with picking a suitable site. Sunny, close to a water source, fenced for deer. Weed-whip any grass or weeds close to the soil. Leave them there.

A thin sprinkle of any fertilizer additives should be enough unless you know your soil is severely lacking in a specific nutrient. Our Foothill soils are low in phosphorus, so soft rock phosphate is good to add now.

Create the shape of the garden bed using cardboard. 6-8 layers of newspaper can serve the same purpose. The cardboard's primary function is to kill the grass or weeds underneath and to prevent it from re-growing. Be sure to overlap the seams.

It is important to thoroughly wet down or soak the cardboard with water before moving onto the next step.

Step 2: Nitrogen (manure, compost, dead green things)

On top of your cardboard goes your nitrogen source in a 1-2 inch depth. Depending on your resources this might be manure, compost, worm castings or fresh clippings.

If you have a friend who keeps horses you can get loads of free manure. If there is a high hay or bedding content in the manure, add a bit of nitrogen-rich organic fertilizer help balance out the carbon to nitrogen ratio. The fresher the manure is the more nitrogen it has. If you're very far from livestock try asking around for fresh grass clippings or other fresh green trimmings.

Step 3: Carbon (spoilt hay, straw, leaves, dead brown things)

Carbon will break down and provide an ideal 'humus' layer for your plants. Carbon is what you need the most of in sheet mulch. Add a thick layer of your carbon material 4-8" inches thick on top of the manure and cardboard. Other carbon sources might include seaweed, dry leaves, finely ground bark, or wood shavings. Water this carbon layer until it is very wet and heavy.

Step 4: Compost

On top of your carbon layer goes a nice 1-2 inch layer of finished compost. This might be the most expensive layer if you aren't making your compost at home, but it is also the most

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important layer.

In your final layer, this is the part your seeds and seedlings will grow in initially until the layers below are penetrated by roots and broken down, so make it a nice thick layer, 2-4 inches.

REPEAT Steps 2, 3 & 4 if you have the materials. The taller the pile, the better!

Step 5: Carbon topping on your lasagna bed

Finally cover your precious, vulnerable compost with 1-2 inches of carbon: straw, leaves, etc. This layer of mulch will help lock in moisture and protect from drying winds. The mulch will also deter the sprouting of unwanted plants and allow you to favor and establish those you desire in the garden

Step 6: Water, water, water

Water your whole sheet mulch down until you are satisfied it is thoroughly soaked. This will activate the decomposition process, attract the worms and help all of your layers get to know one another more intimately through nutrient exchange.

Step 7: Wait, and then plant!

Give your bed at least a couple of months to 'cook'. It will shrink considerably. Come planting time, pull the top layer of straw aside, and plant!