

How to Kill Your Lawn by Sheet Mulching

Thinking of getting rid of your lawn? An easy and ecological way to reduce or eliminate your lawn (turf) is to sheet mulch. This method is also known as layer, or lasagna mulching.

Why remove your lawn? The most common reason is to save water. Lawns require a lot of water to look lush and green. Replacing it with a drought tolerant landscape should result in substantial water savings.

Sheet mulching is a safe way to smother and kill the lawn, as no chemicals are used. It is *strongly* suggested to sheet mulch in late autumn, so that the winter rains aid the breakdown of materials. If you choose to do this when there is little or no precipitation, then be prepared to water the area regularly to keep it moist.

Follow these steps:

1. Mow the lawn on the very lowest setting to eliminate as much grass as you can.
2. Apply and spread a 2-3" layer of compost to the area.
3. Cover the compost with one layer of cardboard, removing any labels or tape beforehand. Overlap the cardboard pieces slightly, and weigh down the corners with rocks or other heavy objects. It is easier to use large pieces of cardboard, such as appliance boxes. You may substitute 6 layers of newspaper, but cardboard is much easier to work with.
4. Cover the cardboard with a 4-5" layer of mulch, such as wood chips or a finer bark mix. This will slow evaporation and enrich the soil as it breaks down.
5. If there is no regular precipitation, water the area regularly to keep it moist, which encourages the breakdown of the layers.
6. Optimally, it is best to wait approximately six months before planting, so that the cardboard has completely broken down. If you choose to plant sooner, you may need to cut through partially broken down cardboard to plant.
7. To irrigate the new landscape after it is planted, it is advised to use an in-line drip system if possible. If properly installed, in-line drip delivers water slowly and steadily to the root-zone of plants, which encourages healthy growth.
8. Also, after the new landscape is installed, be sure to keep the area mulched. Mulch not only acts as an insulating barrier against evaporation, it is also a deterrent for weed germination.