

# How to Build Soil: Sheet Mulching

Having healthy soil is the key growing a bountiful herb garden. Learn how to mulch your garden and build your soil the natural way.

Sheet mulching, also known as lasagna gardening, is a popular permaculture technique that takes soil building and health to a whole other level. And it is one of the fastest ways to transform the soils in your herb garden. It can be as simple as applying a layer of weed suppressing cardboard topped with 3 inches of wood chips or compost.

This basic sheet mulching technique works great if you are sheet mulching already established perennial gardens. But if you really want to build some amazing soil, try this method.



- 1 Cut back any vegetation in the site you wish to grow in.
- 2 Plant any large crops that require a deep hole (trees, shrubs, and established perennials) and water well. We do this now, to make sure that the large root systems of these plants can establish themselves in the native soil. Then we sheet mulch around them to mimic the natural cycles of soil building.
- 3 Place a layer of cardboard down the whole length and width of your garden bed. Make sure you remove any tape and that you are using brown cardboard only. Do not use white cardboard or pieces with inks and dyes. Newspapers can also be used.
- 4 Sprinkle any mineral amendments you choose to use based on your soil's needs.
- 5 Add 3–12 inches bulk organic matter: any materials that may have weed seeds like hay

or fresh manure can be added to this layer. Examples are: straw, spoiled hay, alfalfa, cut clover, seaweeds, pulled weeds, cut vegetation, and stable bedding. Have both fresh and dry materials. Work with whatever you have access to and make sure it's diverse. Apply a mixture of these materials covering all of the cardboard.

- 6 Place a new layer of weed suppressing cardboard or newspaper, make sure to overlap any edges so weeds can't grow through the gaps.
- 7 Apply 2–3 inches of finished compost.
- 8 Apply a top layer of 2–3 inches weed-free carbon rich material, such as wood chips (not cedar or walnut) straw, or leaves.
- 9 Water well and let marinate.

Your sheet mulched garden bed can be planted right away: simply push back the top layer of mulch and plant seeds directly in the finished compost layer. Or you can let this bed rest for a few months, letting the soil microbes do their job.