

# Mulch

Mulch is essentially a layer of organic material placed on the surface of the soil. Keeping your garden beds mulched is essential for creating healthy soil and consequently, healthy plants.

## Organic Mulch

- reduces moisture loss from the soil surface, thus aiding plant growth and reducing the need to water
- suppresses weed growth, which reduces competition for water and nutrients
- minimises temperature fluctuations in the soil
- adds nutrients to the soil when broken down and improves soil structure
- reduces run-off and soil movement from garden beds



## Mulch types

Plants with low nutrient requirements, such as many local and Australian native plants, benefit from bush mulch or recycled timber mulch. They also last longer before breaking down and they release very few nutrients.

Very fine mulches (e.g. grass clippings) are to be avoided as they can compact and prevent water from penetrating the soil beneath. Their fineness also means they retain water preventing it from infiltrating the soil beneath.

A good organic mulch is one that is a mix of fine and coarse particles.

Straw based mulches (e.g. pea straw, lucerne) are excellent mulch because they are high in nitrogen, but they can also be expensive to use as a general mulch. They are best used on areas where the high nutrient content can be utilised, like the vegetable garden.

## HOW TO MULCH

1. Remove weeds.
2. Moisten the soil thoroughly.
3. If the water is running off the surface, fork through some compost to aid with the water retention.
4. Lay your mulch thickly (7-10 cm deep).
5. Don't mulch right up to the stems of your plants as this can cause fungal disease. Leave a gap of at least 4 cm and monitor.
6. Top up your mulch every 6-12 months depending on the breakdown rate of your mulch.

