

How To Get and Apply Mulch



- Mulch is important to soil and plant health, and acts like a sponge when it rains – allowing water to be held and slowly seep into the ground.
- To get and apply mulch, use the following as a guide.

Let's get started

1. Remove any weeds from the area.
2. If the soil is highly compressed, break up the surface using a metal rake or shovel.
3. Place about a 4 inch layer of mulch over the entire area.
4. Keep mulch at least 5 - 6 inches away from the base of trees and shrubs.



How Much Mulch Do I Need?

- Measure the length and width of the areas you want to mulch. The measurements should be in feet.
- Mulch is delivered or purchased by the cubic yard. To figure out how many cubic yards you need to follow the formula below:
 1. Multiply the width by the length (in feet) to get the square footage of the area.
 $\text{width} \times \text{length} = \text{area (square feet)}$
 2. Multiply the area by .33 feet (4" depth of mulch)
 $\text{area} \times .33 = \text{cubic feet}$
 3. To get the cubic yards, divide by 27.
 $\text{cubic feet} \div 27 = \text{cubic yards}$

Where Can I Apply Mulch?

Mulch can be applied in numerous places. Consider:

- Large areas of bare, compacted soil.
- Swales or depressions where water flows.
- Areas around trees extending to the dripline.
- Bare soil areas in the planted garden.
- In place of turf.

Where Can I Get Mulch?

Free from an Arborist

- A truckload of free mulch can be delivered to your home by an arborist. Arborists are specialists who trim and prune trees.
 - Search the web under “Tree Service” to find someone in the area.
 - Let them know you will be using it around plants and don’t want wood chips from a diseased tree or palms.
 - They can deliver it to your home.
 - Since they deliver a truckload of mulch, find out if your neighbors need some too and have a mulch party!

Purchased Mulch

- Bags of bark can be purchased at local nurseries or home improvement centers. Mulch by the cubic yard can be purchased from tree and soil farms. You can pick up the mulch from there or they can deliver it for an extra fee.
 - Do not buy sawdust or wood shavings. These won’t allow enough air into the soil.
 - Mulch chips work best when they are between 1 and 3 inches in size. (Pieces smaller than that, smother the soil and do not allow oxygen to get into the soil. Larger pieces get kicked around or can cause tripping.)

Make Your Own Mulch

- When you prune trees, you can chip them up into mulch using a chipper.
- Chippers will work on branches up to 3 inches in diameter. You can purchase one or rent one from a local home improvement centers.
- Renting a chipper can be costly. Find out if your neighbors have branches that need chipping and share the cost.
- Do not use grass clippings as mulch around plants. They smother the soil and do not allow oxygen to get into the soil. Compost your grass clippings instead.
- Under existing trees and shrubs, allow the leaves and branches to fall and stay on the soil. Do not rake them up and throw them away.

Consider Native Bees

- In California 60 - 70% of native bee species live in underground tunnels.
- These bees need direct access to bare, well-drained, undisturbed soil.
- To support these valuable pollinators, U.C. Berkeley’s Urban Bee Lab recommends leaving some out-of-the-way portions of your yard or garden as bare, unmulched, soil.