

CHOOSING MULCH FOR YOUR GARDEN

The end of Winter & early Spring is the best time to mulch your garden. Ideally, the soil will be moist from winter rains, and you want to help keep that moisture bank in the soil and protect it; before warmer temperatures cause the topsoil to dry out.

It's also the perfect time to incorporate clay (we recommend our Sand Remedy product) into sandy soil to help with re-wetting and water holding in the root zone, so that plants can survive through the harsh months to come.

Mulch is essential in our hot summers to protect the roots of plants, and to conserve precious moisture levels in the soil.

There are three types of mulches:

- Feeding mulches (such as pea straw, lupin mulch, lucerne, our 3 way mixes;
- Woody mulch (such as our Economulch and recycled tree prunings) and
- Permanent mulch (such as pebbles and stones).

The following chart is a guide for the best kinds of mulch to apply to your garden. (For additional information, see our [product information](#) & sustainable gardening [fact sheet](#))



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MULCH CHART – WHAT DO WE RECOMMEND?

	Straw	Pea Straw	Lucerne	Lupin	3 way Feeder Mulch	Shredded mulch	Woody mulch	Permanent mulch
Vegetables & Herbs	*	*	*	*				
Roses	*	**	*	**	**	**	*	
Fruit Trees	*	**	*	*	**	*	**	
Natives					**	*	**	*
Ornamental trees & shrubs					**	**	**	*
Pots & baskets	*	*	*	**				*
Perennial garden beds	*	*	*	*	**	*	*	*
Flowering annuals & bulbs	*	*	*	*		*		

* Suitable ** Highly Suitable

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OUR MULCHES:

Straw

Oaten or Wheaten straw, the lower portion of the plant that has had seed heads removed. (Please note –there will always be some seeds remaining in straw.) This is the most economical form of mulch. Comes in standard bales (approx. 1m x 45cm x 45cm) - one bale will cover approx. 3 – 5 metres square depending on how thick you use it. Breaks down fairly quickly (within months) and adds organic matter to the soil.



Pea Straw

Grown for stockfeed, straw is the lower portion of the plant that has had seed heads removed. (Please note –there will always be some seeds remaining in straw.) Peas are nitrogen fixing plants and therefore pea straw is slightly higher in nitrogen which means it helps feed the soil as it decomposes. Comes in standard bales (approx. 1m x 45cm x 45cm) - one bale will cover approx. 3 – 5 metres square depending on how thick you use it. Breaks down fairly quickly (within months) and adds organic matter to the soil. Shredded pea straw is also available in compressed 50L bags.

Convenient to put in your car, clean and shredded material is easy to use for pots & baskets.



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Lucerne Straw

Also known as alfalfa, Lucerne is often used for stockfeed. It is only seasonally available. Lucerne is nitrogen fixing and therefore the straw is slightly higher in nitrogen which means it helps feed the soil as it decomposes. Comes in standard bales (approx.. 1m x 45cm x 45cm) - one bale will cover approx. 3 – 5 metres square depending on how thick you use it. Breaks down fairly quickly (within months) and adds organic matter to the soil.

Lupin Mulch

Grown for stockfeed, the plant is shredded and partially composted. Lupins are nitrogen fixing and therefore the mulch is slightly higher in nitrogen which means it helps feed the soil as it decomposes. Comes in compressed 45L bags, and can be ordered in 1 cubic metre bulka bags for home delivery. 45L bags are convenient to put in your car, clean and shredded material is easy to use for pots & baskets.



3 Way Feeder Mulch

We do two versions – General and Native 3 Way Mulch. A blend of manure + compost + shredded mulch.

The compost and manure components break down to feed the soil, while the shredded mulch component is longer lasting and will help protect the soil.

This product saves time – there is no need to apply manures & then apply mulch over the top; so it is great if you have a large area to do.

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Shredded Mulch (Economulch)

Made from aged, ground up & partially composted green waste. This is a basic woody mulch product that serves to protect the soil, prevent weeds and is slow to decompose. It will grey off over time but our mulches are not dyed. They are a chocolate brown colour and consist of particles & shreds of various sizes.

Economulch is made to Australian Standard AS4454 to ensure consistent quality. It is processed to eliminate weed seeds, pathogens and disease, including dieback.

Woody Mulch (Prunings)

Coarse tree prunings mulch (does contain some leaf material). The most economical way to mulch. Woodchips are long lasting – taking several years to break down; but will eventually help create a good soil structure (especially if applied over a layer of compost, and kept moist). Can also be used for areas of light foot traffic. Use thickly – 10-15cms is ideal.

A concern with using woodier mulch is 'nitrogen drawdown'. Basically, in the breakdown process of the mulch, the microbes fuel up on nitrogen; often from the soil, meaning that it isn't available to plants. However, once this part of the cycle is over, the microbe population dies down, and releases the nitrogen into the soil once more. If you are particularly concerned about nitrogen drawdown, simply sprinkle a light layer of blood and bone on the soil, underneath the mulch. This will feed up the microbes and your plants won't suffer.



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Permanent mulches

These are mainly used for landscaping effects, and include things like pebbles, crushed brick or stone, etc. They do help hold moisture in the soil, and last forever! They are best suited to plants which don't drop many leaves (eg. succulents).

If buying pebbles and river stones, check they are responsibly sourced.



General Tips for Mulching:

- The best mulches are light coloured (to reflect heat rather than absorb it); and are made from large particles. Coarse textured mulches allow water to easily penetrate between the gaps and don't tend to mat together and restrict water penetration.
- Always water your soil well BEFORE putting down mulch
- If you are mulching over weeds, a layer of wet newspaper (at least 10 sheets thick) forms a great barrier. Soak the newspaper in a wheel barrow or similar before laying it in overlapping sections on the ground, then apply your mulch straight on top. Should you need to plant into it, simply puncture the layer of paper and plant away!
- Remember to keep mulch a few centimetres away from the stems of your plants to allow air flow. Mulching too close or covering up stems may result in rotting.

Mulch Spreading Service:

The Green Life Soil Co can supply and spread mulch onto your garden beds. For a quote, please call and speak to one of our team, or use our [contact form](#) and we'll get back to you with more information.

