

Mulching

Protect and feed the soil with a surface layer

DIFFICULTY Easy
TYPE Ongoing practice
TIME 20–40 min per bed



DIFFICULTY
Easy



TIME
20–40 min/bed



COST
Low–free



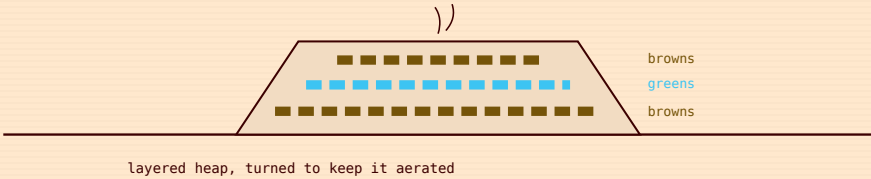
BEST SEASON
Year-round,
especially before
summer/winter
extremes



FREQUENCY
Topped up 2–4
times a year

01 A protective surface layer

Mulch sits on top of the soil rather than being dug in — its job is to reduce evaporation, suppress weeds, moderate soil temperature, and slowly feed the soil as it breaks down.



02 What you'll need

- Mulch material — straw, sugar cane, wood chip, or leaf litter depending on the bed
- A rake to spread it evenly
- Enough volume to achieve a decent depth (a thin layer does little)

03 Method

1. Weed and water the bed thoroughly before mulching.
2. Spread mulch 5–10cm deep, keeping it clear of direct contact with stems and trunks.
3. Water again after applying — this helps settle the mulch and start the moisture-retention benefit immediately.
4. Top up as it breaks down or thins, typically a few times a year.
5. Choose mulch type to suit the bed — fine mulch for veggie beds, coarser wood chip for pathways and around trees.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Mulch causing collar rot** — piled against stems or trunks; always leave a small gap around the base.
- **Nitrogen drawdown** — fresh woody mulch can temporarily tie up nitrogen as it breaks down; use aged mulch around hungry vegetables, or add extra nitrogen.
- **Mulch blowing or washing away** — too light a material for an exposed site; choose a heavier mulch or water it in well.
- **Slugs and snails sheltering in mulch** — a minor trade-off; monitor and manage if it becomes a problem.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Before the heat of summer (moisture retention) and again before winter (temperature buffering) in most zones.
DURATION	A single application lasts several months before needing a top-up.
MAINTENANCE	Top up 2–4 times a year as it breaks down and thins.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Soil beneath stays visibly moister for longer between waterings, and weed pressure drops noticeably.

06 Tips & variations

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COMMON MISTAKES

Piling mulch directly against plant stems or trunks

Applying too thin a layer to make any difference

PRO TIP

Well-rotted mulch that's already partly broken down feeds the soil faster than fresh material, which needs more time to decompose.