

# CAN YOU DIG IT!



## Awesome Mulch

What is the secret of saving water, having wonderful soil and no weeds?

Mulch! Mulch is anything you lay on top of the soil that covers it. Most commonly people use straw, dead leaves, grass clippings and woodchips, but farmers sometimes even use black plastic as a mulch.

### Reasons to Use a Mulch

- 1. Save water!** By using a mulch through the summer to shade the soil you can save a lot of water. Make sure mulch is at least 2 – 3 inches thick and to soak the ground thoroughly before putting the mulch on. When you water, you can pull the mulch aside, or try to water through it– always check the soil to make sure they water is getting through.
- 2. Stop weed seeds!** By covering the bare soil, all the weed seeds that fly around through the air have no soil to land on. Also, any seeds already in the soil will be shaded by the mulch, and won't get the sunlight they need to germinate.
- 3. Create amazing soil life!** Underneath a natural mulch of leaves, grass clippings or straw, beneficial soil critters grow like crazy. Earthworms come right to the surface because the soil is kept moist all the time. Moist soil is happy soil. When soil dries out till its crispy, it is dead soil – mulch helps keep your soil alive.

### What Kind of a Mulch to Use?

For your vegetable garden: dead leaves, straw, grass clippings

For your berry bushes and fruit trees: wood chips (not cedar, preferably hardwood chips)

### When to Use a Mulch (and when NOT to)

Once your plants are established, and have grown several inches above the ground, it's a great time to mulch them. Over winter all garden soil should be covered in a mulch if there is nothing growing there – this protects the soil from harsh winter rains.

In early spring, it's a good idea to pull mulch off the soil so the sun can hit the soil directly to warm it up. Also, when starting seeds you cannot have a mulch over top of the seeds or they will not germinate!

Finally, if you're having big problems with slugs, you may want to clear away all debris, including mulch, until your plants get large enough to handle a few slug bites – once they are big, put the mulch back.

In the spring, dead leaves and straw are good mulches to use. In the summer, grass clippings make a great mulch, and they even add nutrients to your soil as they break down.

