



Mulching your garden

Mulch is an essential tool in creating a low maintenance garden as it provides a protective covering on the soil.

Used correctly, it helps to conserve water, keeps weeds at bay, cools the soil in summer, slows run-off, reduces erosion and can improve soil quality.

WHICH MULCH?

Mulches are available in many colours and forms. So which do you choose? First, decide what look you want to achieve.

Non bio-degradable mulches

Stones and pebbles will give a modern look but can reflect the heat.

Wood products

Woodchips and pine bark look more natural and are ideal for a casual look, but the finer the chip the more suited it will be to a formal garden.

Rapid biodegradable mulches

Straw, lucerne, lawn clippings, compost and manure mulches break down quickly and return nutrients to the soil, making them ideal for vegetable gardens and around Azaleas and Rhododendrons. These materials, as they break down quickly and generate heat, should not be applied in layers more than 15mm thick.

To minimise fire risk, avoid using flammable mulch materials against the house—use non-flammable mulches, such as pebble mulch, instead. Whichever you choose remember, your mulch will only be effective if applied and maintained properly.

HOW DO I APPLY IT?

- Remove all weeds before applying.
- Break up the soil surface and water well.

- Spread the mulch evenly across the soil surface to a depth of 75mm.
- Clear the mulch from around the plant stems to avoid collar rot.

MAINTAINING MULCH

- If the mulch becomes too dry and repels water, rake it to break the surface crust, then water it. This is most likely to occur with small particle mulches.
- If weeds appear, remove or spray them before they can flower and seed.
- When removing weeds, be careful not to bring soil to the surface as this can encourage weed growth.
- Top up the mulch periodically as it will generally decompose over time.

WATER RESOURCES STRATEGY

Think water, act water is the ACT Government's strategy for sustainable water use and management. It aims to reduce Canberra's per person water consumption by 12 per cent by 2013 and 25 per cent by 2023.

Think water, act water provides a comprehensive framework for a partnership between the community, industry and government in managing, using and conserving the water resources of the region.

It includes an extensive range of measures, which will ensure water supply security for the ACT, protect and improve ecological values associated with our waterways, and improve the amenity of urban areas.

The strategy outlines a range of initiatives to be put in place to assist Canberrans to increase water efficiency around the home and garden.

WATER EFFICIENCY INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

You may wish to consider the home and garden water efficiency programs offered as part of the ACT Government's water strategy, *Think water, act water*.

Details of all ACT Government water efficiency incentive programs are available from www.thinkwater.act.gov.au

WATERWISE GARDENING WORKSHOPS

ACTEW Corporation, in conjunction with local, independent specialists, offers waterwise gardening workshops designed to teach you how to have a healthier garden that uses less water. At the workshop you will learn about efficient garden watering systems and methods, and the benefits of using mulch and drought tolerant plants. For more information, or to book a place at a workshop, call ACTEW's Water Conservation Office on 6248 3131.

XERISCAPE GARDENS

Visit the ActewAGL Xeriscape Gardens at Heysen Street, Weston to learn more about water-efficient gardening. The gardens are open to the public at selected times on weekends during Spring and Summer (excluding the Christmas/New Year period), or by appointment.

To check details of opening times and events at the gardens, visit the ActewAGL website at www.actewagl.com.au or call 6242 1191.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on water issues, water efficiency rebates and *Think water, act water* initiatives:

Ph: 13 22 81

Email: WaterResources@act.gov.au

Website: www.thinkwater.act.gov.au