

Using Shredded Paper As Garden Mulch



USING SHREPPED PAPER

As Garden
Mulch

WWW.FRUGALGARDENING.COM

Should you use shredded paper as garden mulch? Normally, I spend my time telling you that the [advice you've heard countless times is bogus](#). But using shredded paper in your

garden is actually a great idea.

What is mulch?

[Mulch](#) is a substance added to the garden that helps soil retain moisture and stay cool. It also keeps weeds away and can prevent frost damage in the winter. Organic mulches break down and can eventually improve the condition and nutrient composition of the soil. Non-organic mulches, like plastic mulch, can't break down but can often be reused year after year.

Other things you can use for mulch include:

- wood chips
- leaves
- straw
- coco coir
- compost
- plastic

And yes, you can use shredded paper as mulch! One huge benefit of paper mulch is that it's FREE and super easy to make. If you regularly use a paper shredder, emptying the canister and using the remnants in your garden is a good way to recycle them since [most recycling plants don't accept shredded paper](#).

How to use shredded paper as mulch

The main task you need to complete before using paper as mulch is shredding. You can use a paper shredder to rip the paper into pieces or do it by hand.

If you need to make a lot of paper mulch and don't have a shredder, try getting the family involved in shredding paper.

Be careful when selecting the paper you'll be shredding. Anything thick and glossy—like pages in a color magazine—contains heavy metals that can leach out into the

soil. But newsprint and regular printer paper are generally safe to use as mulch.

As with any kind of mulch, cutting it into small pieces is key. Plus, if you tried to stick sheets of paper over the soil, they'd quickly end up blown elsewhere.

After applying shredded paper to your garden, dampen it with water to keep it from flying all over the place.

Did you know that you can also add shredded paper to your compost bin? If you have plenty of mulch and not enough room in your recycling bin, shredded paper can go into the compost and takes about 2 to 6 weeks to break down. It's considered a "brown" ingredient, so if you drop a lot of shredded paper into your bin, make sure to balance it out with "green" ingredients like grass clippings.

7 Places Where You Can Get Free Mulch



7 PLACES WHERE YOU CAN
Get Free Mulch

WWW.FRUGALGARDENING.COM

Mulch is one of the most useful tools for gardeners. It's especially helpful at a time when the weather is unpredictable. We've begun to see the drastic effects of

climate change in earnest, namely hotter summers. And while many garden plants love warm weather, there's a point where the heat becomes unbearable—even for heat-loving plants like tomatoes and peppers. Mulch is a multi-purpose substance that can help gardeners conserve moisture, control soil temperatures, and improve soil consistency.

But where do you actually get mulch? Sure, you can buy bags of mulch from a garden center, but are there ways to get mulch for free?

The answer: Absolutely!

How to get free mulch

The first strategy is to make your own mulch. Free sources of mulch around the home include:

- Leaves
- Grass clippings
- Pine needles
- [Compost](#)
- Straw

Other sources for free mulch

Other places where you can get free mulch include:

- **Arborists:** These are the people who provide tree care services around town. When they cut down trees or branches, they'll usually turn pieces into mulch and take that to a landfill for disposal. There's no guarantee that they'll share the stuff with you for free, but you can ask politely! Just don't expect it to arrive neatly bagged. Make sure you have a spot on your property to accommodate a truckload of dumped wood mulch.
- **Local municipalities:** Many cities have yearly environment days to spread awareness about earth-

friendly activities. Some cities, for instance, offer free compost to interested citizens. Other towns may have garden products like [compost](#) or other types of mulch available upon request. Not sure if your city offers any garden supplies for free? Just ask!

- **Neighbors:** Not everyone is a gardener, but your neighbors may have many useful garden amendments lying around their yard. If your property is devoid of [leaves](#), but they have a pile of leaves to rake every fall, consider offering your raking services in exchange for taking that free mulch home.

Tips for mulching

Get your free mulch and take it home. Now it's time to apply it around your plants. The key to applying mulch is not to lay it down too thick. Too thick a layer can prevent plant roots from breathing and eventually suffocate them. Yikes!

Aim for about 1 to 2 inches of mulch around the base of a plant. After mulching, water deeply. You may have to reapply mulch throughout the season, but one application is usually enough to last a whole gardening season.