

Mulch your garden to save water and prevent weeds

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With the arrival of spring, many people are starting to garden. Once seeds have germinated or transplants have been started, add some mulch to help prevent weeds and save water. Be sure to use the right kind of mulch. Hardwood mulch used in landscapes is not the best for gardens. As it breaks down it uses nitrogen from the soil that would normally feed the vegetables. A better alternative is to use a paper product like newspaper or cardboard, but not the slick surfaced material that would prevent water from passing through. I like to use carryout pizza boxes because they are a good size to go between the rows of vegetables in my garden. I lay the boxes flat and place bricks or rocks on them to hold them down. Several layers of newspaper would work as well. If you don't like the look of the recycled paper in your garden, add some grass clippings or shredded leaves on top of the paper or cardboard. Be sure the grass was not recently treated with a weed killer as this may damage plants in the garden. A layer of paper or cardboard will allow some water from rains to move into the soil and will reduce evaporation of water from the soil surface. This means less watering during times without rainfall. A paper-based mulch deters germination of weed seeds. It also prevents soil from splashing onto vegetables during a rain which keeps produce cleaner and protects against the establishment of certain diseases. At the end of the season simply turn the paper/cardboard into the soil with a shovel. It will break down over the winter and provide good organic matter to your garden.

Social Media: **Suggested text to accompany the social media image:**

Gearing up to Garden? Before applying fertilizers, take a soil test. Results will help you identify problem areas in your garden and provide recommendations on the type and rate of fertilizer application to improve yield. Targeted and timely fertilizer application reduce the risk of over application and potential for runoff to our waterways. After your seeds have germinated and transplants are established, add some mulch to prevent weeds and conserve water. Use paper-based products like newspaper and cardboard and have the added benefit of recycling.



Gearing up to Garden?



Soil test to determine nutrient needs.
Apply fertilizer based on recommendations.



Mulch to prevent weeds and save water.
Use newspaper and cardboard in your vegetable garden and you are recycling!

