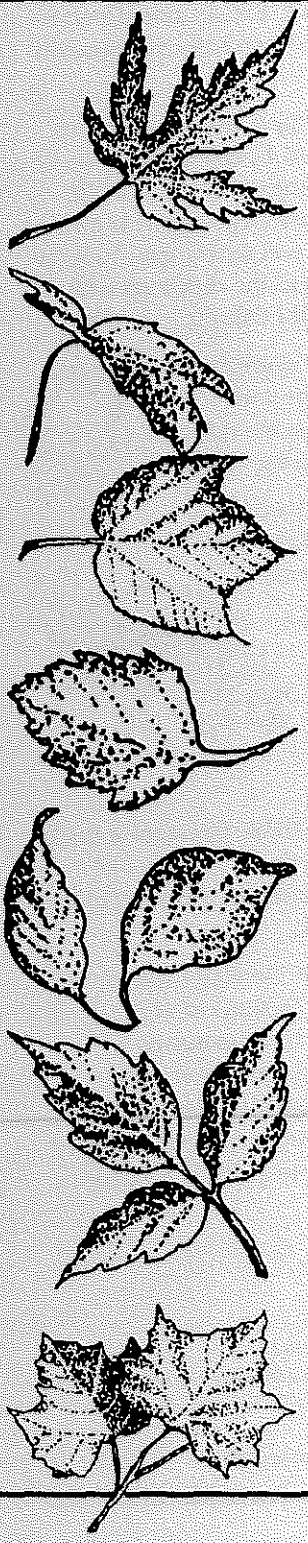
Southeastern Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority

NATURAL MULCHES

UNLIMITED RICHES ARE IN YOUR YARD

Participating communities: *Berkley, Beverly Hills, Birmingham, Clawson, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Madison Heights, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak, Royal Oak Township, and Troy.*



WHY NOT TURN OVER A NEW (OLD) LEAF?

Fallen leaves carry 50-80 percent of the nutrients a tree extracts from the soil and air, including carbon, potassium, phosphorus, and other elements. These nutrients and elements are essential for plant growth.

What can be done with leaves? There are many options available. Here are five simple, earth-friendly ways to use your leaves -- and enhance your own soils:

1. Compost your leaves. Mix leaves (50%) with grass clippings (25%) and soil (25%). Add sufficient water to maintain a compost pile as wet as a wrung out sponge.

2. Bag extra dry leaves to save for use in your compost pile during spring and summer.

3. In the fall, spread leaves over the vegetable garden or flower bed (sheet composting). Leaves may be chopped and partially mixed with garden soil to speed decomposition. In the spring, at least a month prior to planting, dig in (or remove) any leaves that have not decomposed. These leftover leaves can be recycled under shrubs or trees to help reduce weeds.

4. Use leaves as a mulch around your ornamental plants, bushes, and trees. Mulch maintains moisture, suppresses weeds, and adds tilth to your soil.

5. Let leaves lie where they fall and mow them into the lawn. Shredded leaves nourish the soil and do not harm the lawn.

When leaves fall to the ground, they are naturally broken down by earthworms and microorganisms. Humus (similar to compost) is the end result of the decomposition process. Humus is light and fluffy, and improves the structure of sandy and clay soils.

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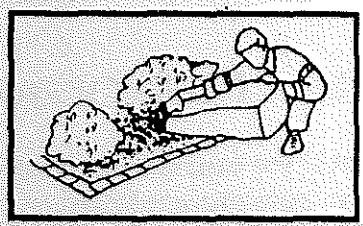
MULCH IS MARVELOUS

Shredded leaves, grass clippings, and other shredded yard materials can be recycled as mulch. Mulching around flowers, vegetables, bushes and trees helps to support healthy plant growth.

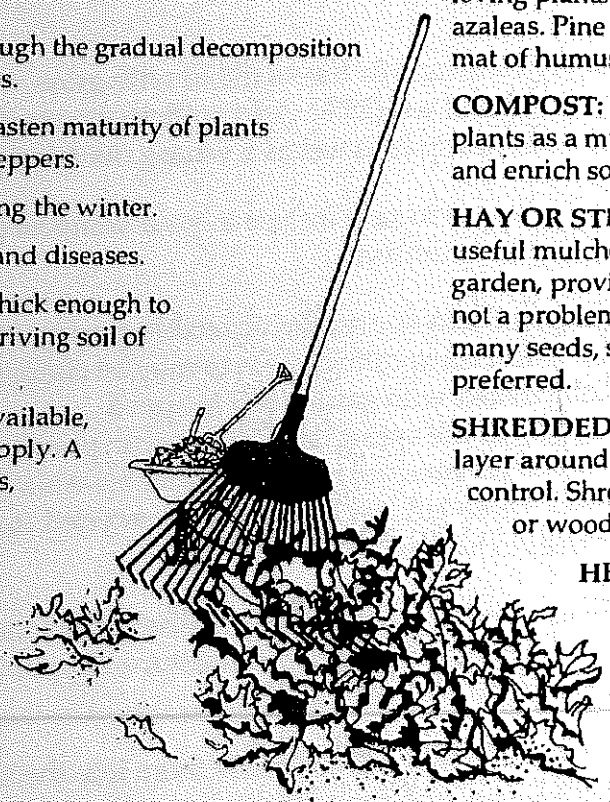


WHY MULCH? Here are some reasons:

- To reduce the need for watering and weeding.
- To reduce soil compaction.
- To stabilize soil temperature.
- To hold moisture in the soil, while allowing rainfall to pass through.
- To enrich your soil through the gradual decomposition of natural yard materials.
- To increase yield and hasten maturity of plants such as tomatoes and peppers.
- To keep soil warm during the winter.
- To help control insects and diseases.

Mulch should be applied thick enough to inhibit weeds without depriving soil of water and oxygen.

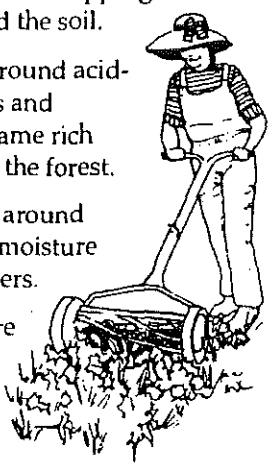
A good mulch is readily available, inexpensive, and easy to apply. A good mulch fits your needs, yard materials, and landscape. Why not try different natural mulches and help reduce the yard waste sent to landfills?



SELECT THE NATURAL MULCH THAT FITS WITH YOUR LANDSCAPE

SHREDDED LEAVES: Chop or shred leaves with a mower or shredder since whole leaves may mat and prevent water from reaching the soil. Leaves help cool soil during the summer and warm soil in the winter. Leaves raked into a shrub border will gradually break down and help nourish the soil.

GRASS CLIPPINGS: Spread dry clippings in a one-inch layer under bushes or around plants. Keep clippings away from young seedlings. Avoid clippings with a herbicide residue or clippings with weed seeds. In a vegetable garden, try laying grass clippings on top of wet newspaper to help resist weeds. Both the newspaper and the clippings will eventually decompose and help build the soil.



PINE NEEDLES: Use pine needles around acid-loving plants such as rhododendrons and azaleas. Pine needles help form the same rich mat of humus that nourishes trees in the forest.

COMPOST: Compost can be placed around plants as a mulch, especially to hold moisture and enrich soil. Apply in 1-3 inch layers.

HAY OR STRAW: Hay and straw are useful mulches in the vegetable garden, provided that rodents are not a problem. Since hay contains many seeds, straw is often preferred.

SHREDDED BARK OR WOOD CHIPS: Spread in a thick layer around shrubs and trees to be effective as a weed control. Shredded cypress or pine bark, nugget pine bark, or wood chips are useful options.

HEALTHY GARDEN TIP: Diversify the type of mulch used in various sections of your garden. Different mulches encourage different types of microorganisms and contribute different nutrients. Diversity of mulches~ as with diversity of plantings, helps build natural resistance to pests and disease.

Funding provided by a grant through the Department of Natural Resources, under the Protecting Michigan's Future Bond Program.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DNR

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3910 W. Webster Road, Royal Oak, MI 48073-6764
810-288-5150

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GIVING BACK EARTH'S RICHES –

USING COMPOST TO BUILD HEALTHY SOIL

BENEFITS OF COMPOST

Compost is an excellent soil conditioner. When mixed with sandy soil, compost helps to retain and hold water. When mixed with clay soils, compost loosens the soil particles and improves drainage.

Compost is known as gardener's gold because it improves soil structure, retains water, encourages root growth, aerates soil, releases nutrients slowly, supports beneficial microorganisms and earthworms, and suppresses some soil-borne diseases.

FEED THE EARTH ♻ COMPOST ♻

Composting is nature's way with waste. Why not be good to your garden?

USING COMPOST

... IN THE GARDEN

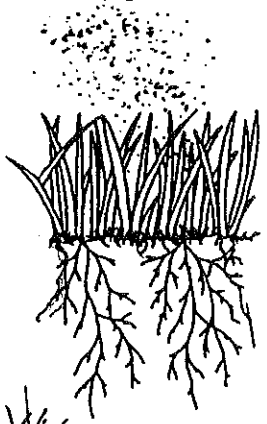
Compost may be added to the garden soil at any time. Spread compost on top of the garden in a 1- 3 inch layer and dig in several weeks before planting. During the growing season, use compost as a top-dressing to give your plants a healthy "snack."

... FOR CONTAINER GARDENING

Add sifted compost to potting soil or container garden soil mixes. For best results, compost should not exceed 1/3 of the total amount of soil. Small amounts of compost can be sprinkled around potted plants at any time.

... AS A TOP-DRESSING ON THE LAWN

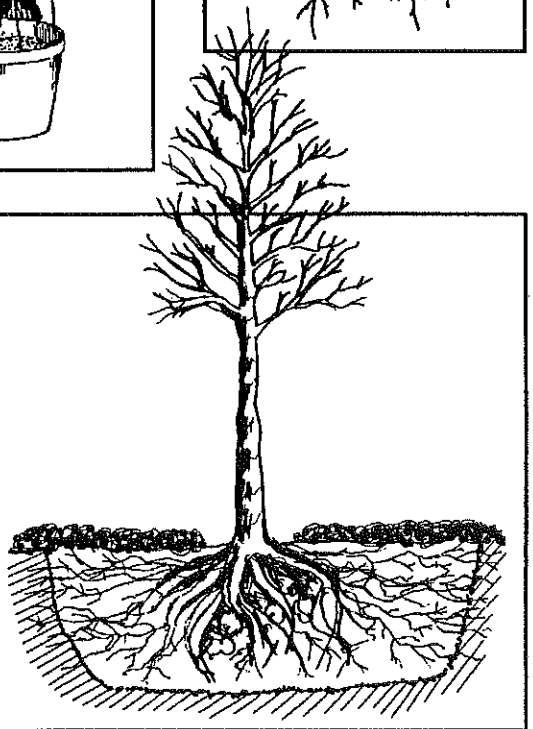
Sprinkle sifted compost over the lawn to help build soil and encourage healthy grass.



... AS A MULCH AROUND TREES AND SHRUBS

Spread 2 - 4 inches of compost under the canopy of trees and shrubs. Compost will help retain moisture and gradually release nutrients to delicate tree roots. When planting trees, compost should usually ***not*** be added to the planting hole.

Shredded bark or wood chips can be added over the compost to reduce weeds and help hold in moisture. Always keep woody mulches several inches away from the tree trunk.



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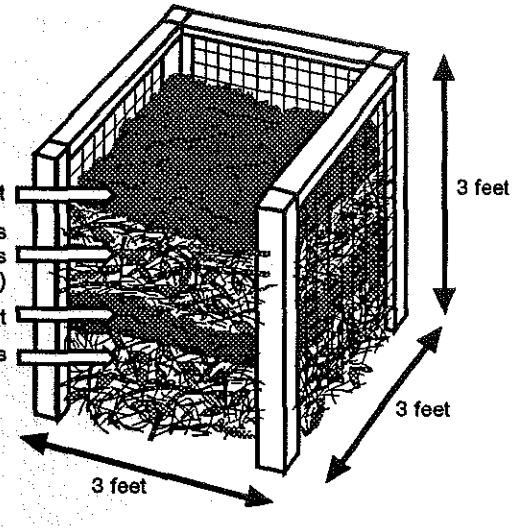
Southeastern Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority

HOME COMPOSTING

TURN YARD WASTE INTO GARDENER'S GOLD

Prepared and distributed by
The Southeastern Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority (SOCRRA)
And the Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority (SOCWA)

Through the natural process of composting, leaves and grass clippings from your yard can be transformed into a soil-enriching substance called compost. The steps for making compost outlined below reflect the experience of SOCRRA Master Composters working in an urban setting.



MATERIALS FOR COMPOSTING

To avoid nuisances and odors, select the materials for your compost pile with care. *Check with your Department of Public Works for specific home composting regulations.*

Yes:	No:
Grass clippings	Dairy products
Leaves — shredded, if possible	Oils and fats
Spent flowers & garden clippings	Meat, fish, bones
Young weeds (without seeds)	Pet manure; Cat litter
Hedge trimmings	Cooked food
Fruit & vegetable peelings	Diseased plants
Lettuce leaves	Black walnut leaves
Coffee grounds, filters, & tea bags	Bread
Fertilizer	Weeds with seeds
Soil or compost	Invasive weeds

For an *ideal* composting mix, combine shredded leaves (50% of total volume), green grass clippings, (25% of total volume) and soil or compost (25% of total volume). Start with available yard clippings and add other materials, as needed, to balance the pile.

The "green" materials have a high nitrogen content which typically causes the pile to heat up and decompose more quickly. To avoid odors, make sure that green materials are mixed thoroughly with brown materials and soil.

BUILDING THE COMPOST PILE

To build the pile, follow these steps:

1. Start with a layer of organic materials such as shredded leaves, grass, or other garden debris.
2. Water the layer until it is as ***moist as a wrung-out sponge.***
3. Add 2"-3" of soil or compost — to provide microorganisms.
4. If possible, mix all materials together as you build the pile.
5. Continue the process of adding organic materials, soil, and water until the bin is filled. Add grass clippings in small amounts and mix in thoroughly.
6. Water each layer...and check moisture periodically.

Build the pile to a size of 3 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet or slightly larger — or fill the compost bin.

TURNING THE PILE

Turning and mixing the compost pile with a pitchfork or compost turner adds oxygen and accelerates the rate of decomposition. The pile may be turned once a week, once a month, several times a year, or not at all. If the pile is ***turned over and mixed from time-to-time and kept moist,*** finished compost is usually available in six to nine months.

Don't worry about the temperature of the pile — either hot or cold composting yields beneficial compost.