

Sheet Mulch Method for Preparing your Soil For any Size Forest Planting Day

We describe here two different types of 'sheet mulch' methods for eliminating sod in time for your planting day, either in early spring or late fall. These are methods that work better than removing it mechanically, which would remove some biologic nutrients. This process helps to begin the re-creation of the 'living soil' in your new ecosystem.



Here is a picture taken 3 months after the sod had been decomposed, and the soil was ready for our planting day. Native plants and trees were arranged, allowing for those needing sun, and those tolerant of shade. There were about 4-6 plants or trees planted, for every 4' X 5' rectangle, that we had laid out with twine tied to stakes. We tried to place trees that were faster growing evenly throughout the forest. We also tried to place trees that were destined to be larger canopy trees farther apart from other plantings. This arrangement made planting day easier.

1. Remove non-native shrubs or small trees, if they will interfere with the sun exposure needs of your new native plants in your design. Your forest will need root space for their closely intertwining roots underground, which helps to bring life to the underground soil.
2. Large native trees can possibly be designed around the forest in your plan, if the roots will not be too close?

Work Order:

- Finish the sheet mulch process at least 3 months, and possibly as long as 6 months, before your desired planting day. This is to completely remove sod or any small competing weeds.
- You can start this process sometime at the end of summer for an early spring planting date.
- Or you can start this process sometime near the beginning of summer for a later fall planting date.
- If you have highly invasive weeds in some parts of your site, like Himalayan Blackberry, Ivy or Holly you might need to wait even longer to be sure that they have been deprived of light, or nutrients to grow back.
(There are Youtube videos of this process of removal that you can watch. Some landscaping firms offer to do this for you. And the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in our State have good recommendations.)

Work Order for Mulching Using Composted Manure + Composted Yard Waste:

1. Cover prepared ground with your choice of cardboard, with all tape and staples removed.
2. Instead of cardboard you can use 2 layers of brown compostable landscape paper, or many layers of black and white newspaper, so that no light can come through.
3. Water the cardboard down, to increase its ability to decompose.
4. Composted manure is applied FIRST in a 2-3 inch layer over the cardboard, or other choices of compostable paper.
5. Then apply layer of 3-4 inches of composted yard waste from a garden mulch supplier.
6. Now we have a total of 5-7 inches of nutrients, and mulch total, waiting to fully eliminate the sod.
7. Many forest planting groups prefer using composted manure, and composted yard waste, because it is easier to plant into, than using arborist's wood chips.
8. Water your site well enough occasionally, and check to see that your paper or cardboard is composting well.
9. You will need to add an additional thin layer of wheat straw right after planting all your plants. The straw decreases weeding the first year, and holds water in the soil during the warmer summer months. It can also be reapplied during the first few years of growth.

Work Order for Mulching Using Basil Camu's Method of Composted Manure + Free Arborists Wood Chips:

1. Cover prepared ground with your choice of cardboard, with all tape and staples removed.
2. Instead of cardboard you can use 2 layers of brown compostable landscape paper, or many layers of black and white newspaper, so that no light can come through.
3. Water the cardboard down, to increase its ability to decompose.
4. Composted manure is applied FIRST in a 2-3 inch layer over the cardboard, or other choices of compostable paper.
5. Then apply a layer of 3-4 inches of arborist's wood chips, from a free 'chip drop' online in your area. If you are associated with a nonprofit you may be able to get a more timely delivery?
6. Now we have a total of 5-7 inches of nutrients, and mulch total, waiting to fully eliminate the sod. This particular method may take up to 6 months for complete decomposition of the sod and weeds.
7. Water your site well enough occasionally, and check to see that your paper or cardboard is composting well.
8. Planting day has to be a bit more supervised with this method: Each plant or sapling has to be planted into the lower layers of the soil carefully, leaving a circle of arborist's chips around the plant, of about 6 inches, so that no chips are actually touching the young plant. A small sapling's contact with the chip's nutrients can cause 'root rot'. And while the native plants thrive with the absorbed moisture stored in the chips, incoming weeds thrive as well. So that more weeding in the first few years of forest care, may be required.

9. You DO NOT need to add an additional thin layer of wheat straw right after planting all your plants in this method. However adding wheat straw around the plants, may decrease your weeding in the first few years, as in the previous method listed.

Here is a Picture of a Small Backyard Forest or Outdoor Classroom:

You can teach anything in a tiny forest!
phonics, mathematics, story telling, writing, art, music,
soil health, carbon sequestration, the water and
weather cycles, history!



This small 2 year old Miyawaki/pocket forest, pictured above, is located in Gresham, Oregon. And it is available for touring, along with a larger Miyawaki forest of 600 sq ft, at the same location. Already the trees, and shrubs tower over an adult in both forests. It's a perfect size for a backyard, or a small outdoor classroom for local schools. This forest has a circumference of 41 ft, a diameter of 13 ft, and a total area of 133 sq ft. These small native forests are inexpensive to plant, because some of our local native plant nurseries do not require nonprofit status, or minimum orders to benefit from wholesale prices. Looking online for the 20-26 species you'll need for your forest is easy to do with our selected 'kit list' located in our Pdf 4 for the Willamette Valley ecoregion. Some prices are as low as \$3.00 per 1 gallon native plant or tree. Well composted manure can sometimes be located for free if you pick it up. And arborist's wood chips can be signed up for online, ahead of time, as a free 'chip drop' (if you choose that method of sheet mulching the sod). The shape of the forest can also be adapted as a thicket for dividing properties, that will increase your privacy, or on farmland as hedgerows that will help the fertility of your soil for regenerative farming.

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