

How to 'Remove' Lawn Using Lasagna Gardening

'Lasagna gardening' is a layered mulch system. It is effective at killing turf without disturbing the soil surface. Disturbing the soil encourages weed seed germination. Also, you do not lose valuable topsoil nutrients using this method; instead, the organic mulch further enriches the soil and improves its texture.

ADVANTAGES

- Easy to do and inexpensive.
- Valuable topsoil stays in place.
- Adds organic matter to the soil.

DISADVANTAGES

- If planting is being done before sheet mulching, you must manually remove turf from areas where plantings are planned.

COMMENTS

- Sheet mulching is not effective in fast-draining soils.
- Do not sheet mulch over septic drainage fields.
- Be sure to mark popup sprayers to avoid covering them with the sheet mulch. You want to convert them to a drip and/or micro irrigation system.

1. Prepare the Site

- Mow the lawn and weeds as short as possible; remove any plant material you do not want in the transformed area.
- Deeply water the cut lawn. Once the area is covered with layers, the moisture, combined with the lack of oxygen and light, introduces a fungus that helps hasten the death of the lawn.
- Dig holes in areas where trees or shrubs are planned. It is easier to plant now than trying to cut through the cardboard/newspaper layer of the mulching. Be sure to remove any weed roots prior to planting.
- Amend the soil with organic matter and/or compost only if a soil test shows a deficiency. NOTE: Amending a planting hole in heavy soil can create a bog garden where plant roots will rot.
- Water the plant thoroughly.

2. Add the Sheet Compost Layers

- Lay 2-3" of manure, followed by 3-4" each of organic material such as leaves, mulched vegetative stems, grass clippings, or straw.
- Soak the area with water.

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3. Add a Weed Barrier

- Put down an organic weed barrier; it is essential the barrier allow water and air to pass through. Do not use plastic.
- Recycled cardboard or a thick layer of newspaper work well. Make sure the layers overlap. Two or three layers (more for newspaper) may be required to achieve a 1/2" thickness.
- Leave a generous opening (for air circulation) around the root crown of established or newly planted trees and shrubs.
- Wet down the weed barrier.

4. Layer Compost and Mulch

- Lay 2" of compost. It is critical this compost is free of both weeds and weed seeds.
- Once again, water your project.
- The final layer is bark mulch. Spread an 3-4" layer of bark mulch. Not only does this layer keep everything 'in place', it is a great weed barrier in itself. Also, the bark mulch will gradually decompose, adding even more organic matter to the planted area.

TIPS

- A simpler method is to place the cardboard directly on the turf, then cover with 4-6" of mulch. Be sure to water each layer.
- Prepare, plant, and place the layers for one area before repeating the process in another.
- Choose a day without wind.
- Have all the materials on-site before you begin.
- Drip or micro irrigation is laid on the top layer of compost layer, underneath the bark mulch.
- Do not sheet mulch right up to the stems or trunks of large shrubs and trees. Leave at least 6" cm of bare soil around the stems (trunk) of larger shrubs or trees.
- Decomposition occurs more quickly in heat. Try sheet mulching in the spring to take advantage of the upcoming warmer months.
- Smaller plant material can be added once the lawn is dead or even when decomposition is well underway. If it is not fully decomposed, use scissors or a sharp knife to cut an 'X' in the cardboard/newspaper layer before digging the planting hole.
- The fall is a terrific time to plant. At the same time, you can 'top up' the surface layer of mulch, if necessary.
- *'Many hands make light work!'*

