

Water Harvesting Techniques: **Mulching**

Mulching is one of the easiest ways to reduce water consumption in your landscape, and it is an essential element of water harvesting systems. *You can start mulching your landscape today, whether you are harvesting water or not!*

What is Mulch?

Mulch is porous material that is placed on top of soil in order to retain soil moisture. Moisture is retained through improved water infiltration and decreased water loss from evaporation.

Free Mulch: Yard Waste and Compost

Plants in your yard create their own mulch as leaves, twigs, seeds, and other debris falls from plants. Instead of raking up the debris and throwing it away, collect the debris and place it around the base of your plant. You can create your own mulch by composting your fruit and vegetable waste and yard waste, and this creates mulch full of nutrients for your plants.

Other Mulch Materials

Straw, bark, wood chips, sawdust, aged manure, living ground cover, rocks, and gravel all can be used as mulch. The organic mulches are preferable to rocks and gravel because they provide nutrients to your plants and retain more moisture.

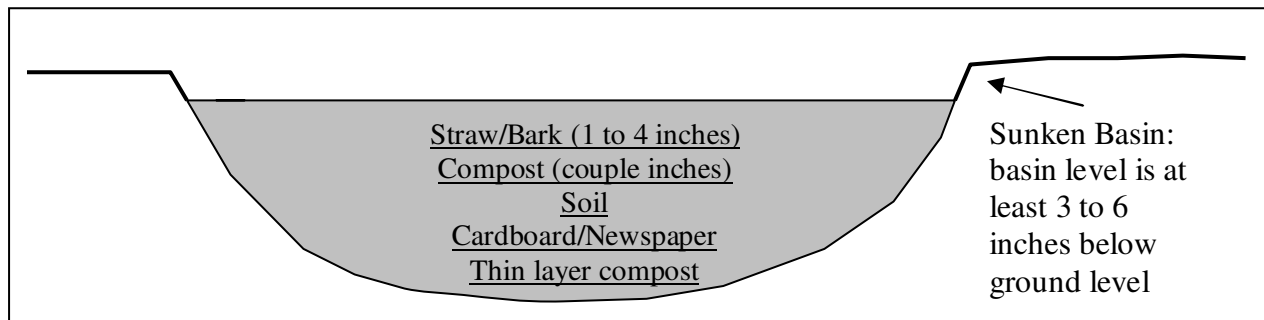
How to Mulch

Distribute a thick layer of mulch 1 to 4 inches deep around all trees, shrubs, and vegetable gardens. Put less mulch around seedlings and more mulch around established plants. Apply mulch on the top of soil; do not mix mulch in with the soil. Reapply mulch every year.

Sheet Mulching

Sheet mulching is a layered mulching technique that is used to improve water retention, increase soil fertility, and keep out weeds. Sheet mulching is a great technique to use in combination with water harvesting basins. Dig out a basin to capture rainwater or greywater at least one foot deep, and then refill the basin in layers as shown below.

Cross Section of Mulched Basin



Once all the layers are in place, soak the basin to start activating the organisms in the soil that will break down mulch materials and improve your soil.