



Mulching



Why do we mulch?

Mulch is a **loose covering** of materials on top of the soil, and acts as a **protective layer**. It can suppress weeds, deter pests, reduce rot, increase moisture, moderate temperature, provide nutrients and improve soil fertility.

When should you mulch?

We recommend you mulch the soil **at least once a year**, in the **autumn** after the growing season, to put your **allotment to bed**. Mulching before the winter will **prepare** the soil for the **following growing season** by improving its fertility as the mulch breaks down, and also suppressing most perennial weeds.

Cardboard

You can buy this from suppliers but can be quickly collected from **deliveries**. You could even ask parents, other teachers for **donations** or see if a **local shop** has lots of cardboard they need to dispose of.



Straw

You can **buy** this from suppliers and garden centers or potentially if you email farmers or your local council there may be some **donated** to you from **farmers/meadows**.



Wood Chips

This can be **bought** from certain suppliers but is generally used if already available. Check if school/staff/parents has had or are going to have any **trees cut down** and ask if they want the wood chips. Often the chippings can be left by companies for little to no extra cost, so it's worth asking your **site team** if there are any **plans** to remove trees, or if there are wood chips available on site.



Manure

Some **garden centres** do sell manure in bags, similar to compost, or you can ask **local farmers** if they would be willing to **donate** or sell you some. When sourcing manure check how well rotted it is, as **well rotted** will work faster, have a weaker smell and might be easier to work with.



Compost

You can **buy** compost **bags** from garden centres, large volumes online, or make your own on your allotment. When **making your own** try and use at least **three bays** in rotation, so that the compost has time to rot down before it is added to beds, and also a mix of organic materials.



Leaves

You can **purchase well rotted** leaf mould or collect leaves from around your school. You could again ask around for donations from staff or parents. Leaves are best used if left to **break down for a year first**, so you would use last year's leaf mould now and collect this year's leaves for the following year, but there is nothing stopping you using **this year's** leaves and letting them mulch down **on the beds**. You can mix in grass clippings and pine needles, but check the species of any evergreen trees as this may make the soil more **acidic**.

For more information on mulching please read page 7 of the low maintenance allotment article, and our compost guide, both available on our website www.thepapillonproject.com



LOW MAINTENANCE SPACES



A GUIDE TO HELP MAKE MAINTAINING SCHOOL ALLOTMENTS EASIER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE
By Poppy Kirby
Assistant Schools' Project Lead

Coffee Grounds

Coffee grounds shouldn't be used alone as mulch, but is an excellent **addition** to another material and can be added to compost, or **mixed in** with other materials such as **leaf mulch** and wood chips. You could collect it yourself and ask other staff for help, collect from school coffee machines if possible or even ask a **local cafe** if they could **donate** some.



Green Manure

You can purchase 'green manure' **seed packets** which work by growing **nitrogen rich plants**, which you can **cut down** and leave on top of the soil, or **dig into** the soil to **mulch down** later in the season. To avoid buying the same seed next year, some will self seed and you can also collect seed from the seed heads.

