

Lawn Removal using Newspaper or Cardboard

Removing your lawn opens up a variety of possibilities for your yard. With your thirsty lawn gone, you may find that your water bills are lower! This natural method, also known as *lasagna layering* or *sheet composting*, involves putting down layers of compost, cardboard or newspaper and mulch over your lawn. The layers create a decomposition process which kills grass and creates a rich fortified soil for future plantings.

How it works

The layers of newspaper/cardboard & compost, etc. eliminate light from reaching the grass. The lack of light stops the process of photosynthesis which helps the smothered grass die back. At the same time, worms, bugs and other beneficial micro-organisms break down the organic matter into your soil so it will be available to your plants.

Materials Needed

Mower, Cardboard or Newspaper, Mulch/Compost, Shovel



What to Do:

1. Mow lawn as short as possible, and throw grass clippings back on lawn.
2. Water thoroughly right away. Moisture is essential to the composting process.
3. Place layers of newspaper or cardboard over the area of lawn you wish to remove:

Using Newspaper:

Place 15-20 layers of newspaper down (black & white print only – no glossy inserts)

Using Cardboard:

Be sure to remove all tape and staples

4. Water again until the paper/cardboard is soggy all the way through
5. Add 4 - 6" of soil or compost or mulch on top of newspaper/cardboard layers
6. Allow 6 - 8 weeks for the grass under the paper/cardboard & compost layers to die back.
Be patient! The longer you allow the decomposition process to take place, the better results you will see.

After your 6 - 8 week waiting period is up, the grass should be dead and much of the organic matter (paper/cardboard, compost) you've added will have been incorporated into the soil by earthworms and other organisms.



Helpful Tips

Timing

Spring is the best time of year but it will also work if you do it in the fall.

- If you want to plant in the fall, start your lawn removal process in the spring
- If you want to plant in the spring, start this process in the fall

Coverage

Be sure to overlap edges of newspaper or cardboard by **at least 6"** for complete coverage so that no sunlight gets through to the ground below.

Moisture

Remember to keep your new 'compost area' watered well. It should have the consistency of a damp sponge.

Some Colorful Options While You Wait....

Want to enjoy some flowers while you wait?

You can scatter native wildflower seeds over the soil/compost right away.

Do you prefer groundcover?

You can plant shallow-rooted ground cover plants right away (strawberry, clover etc.) directly into the top layer of soil/compost. Just don't puncture your paper layers.

NOTE: Just be sure to wait the full 6 to 8 weeks before planting the deeper-rooted plants.

Pros and Cons

Why people love it:

- It's easy, involves minimal labor, and doesn't require you to dig up your old lawn.
- It's cheap! You don't have to haul your old lawn away to the landfill.
- This method leaves all original organic matter in place, doesn't disrupt existing soil structure, and also adds organic matter to the soil!
- Grass becomes soil-improving compost, and at the same time creates air pockets in the soil.

Why some people don't prefer it:

- It takes a fairly long time, so patience is key.
- This is not a practical application for steep slopes.

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