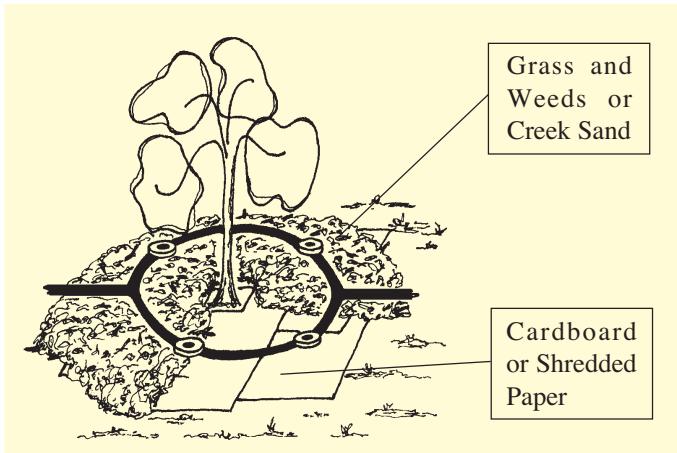


Mulching Materials - 1

M.W. Last
August 95

1. Introduction



This fact sheet is about some of the mulching materials that can be used when mulching gardens. It should be used in conjunction with the fact sheet "How to Mulch Fruit Trees and Vines" - July 94.

Mulching is very important in Central Australia because it helps;

- (i) keep the soil wet around plants,
- (ii) stops the weeds from growing and
- (iii) keeps the worms alive to make fertiliser for plants.

There are a number of materials available in Communities and Homelands that can be used. The following pictures show some of these materials.

2. Cardboard and Newspapers



When the weeds around the plant have been removed and fertiliser spread on the ground, a layer of cardboard is laid on top. Cardboard boxes, when opened up, can be used to make this layer and are usually available from the local store. Boxes are also available from other sources and can be split and laid out flat in the garden.

Newspapers can be used as well as cardboard. Take each newspaper, open it in the middle and lay it out flat. Don't separate each page because this would make the mulch too thin.

3. Blankets and Clothes



Old blankets are excellent to use if cardboard or newspapers are not available. Lay them out on the ground on top of the layer of fertiliser. Old clothes can be used in the same way. Don't burn these materials or take them to the dump because they make good mulching materials.

A layer of grass, weeds or spinifex on top of blankets or clothing keeps them wet with moisture for a long time and provides a good environment for worms and plants.

4. Shredded Paper



The local Community may have a paper shredder for shredding waste paper. Use the shredded paper as a layer to put on top of the fertiliser layer in the same way the cardboard, newspapers, blankets and old clothes were used. Make the layer of shredded paper 100-200 mm thick and wet it with water so it doesn't blow away. Shredded paper makes a big mess if the wind blows it around the garden or Community. If there is a lot of waste paper in the Community, buy a paper shredder and make mulching material for use in local gardens.

5. Pea Staw



The third layer of a mulch consists of garden weeds and grasses which are put on top of the second layer of cardboard, newspaper, old blankets, old clothes or shredded paper.

Pea straw can also be used for the third layer. Bales of pea straw can be purchased from Laucke Flour and Feeds Pty Ltd, 3 Indiana Complex, 74 Elder Street, Alice Springs. Tel. 08-89528611 or Fax. 08-89532909. If other types of straw are available, they can be used in the same way. Spinifex is a very similar material and if there is plenty of it, use it as the third layer of a mulch.

6. Creek Sand



If weeds, grass, pea straw or spinifex are not available to use as the third layer, creek sand can be used as a substitute. It doesn't rot away like the other materials do, however it can be used on top of the second layer to hold it down and stop it from blowing away.

Creek sand is heavy, so only use a thin layer. As the garden grows there will be more weeds, grass etc. available to put on top of the second layer reducing the need to use more creek sand. As layers rot away in the garden, add new ones to continue the mulching process.

How to Mulch Fruit Trees and Vines

M W Last
July 94

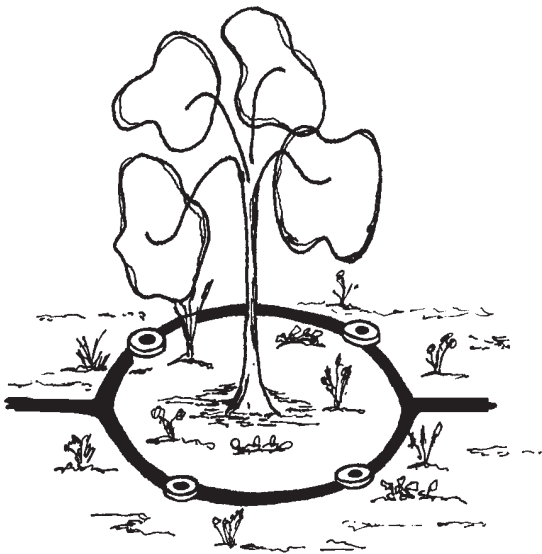


Fig 1

Clean away weeds and grass from around the tree or vine to a distance of 1 metre out from the plant.

Blood and Bone
or Densified
Poultry Manure

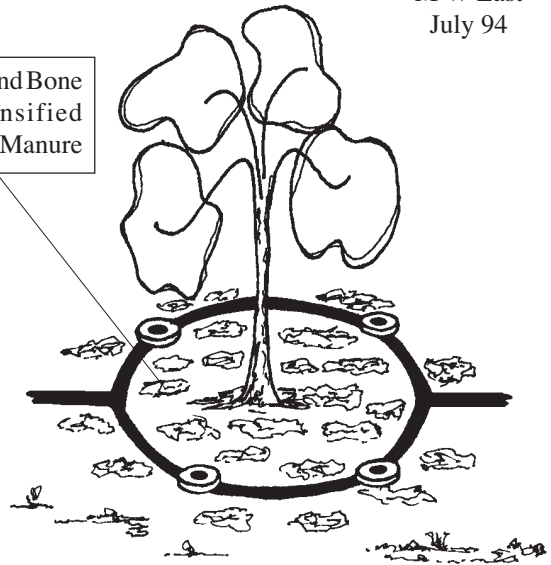


Fig 2

Sprinkle Blood and Bone or Densified Poultry Manure on the soil surface around the tree or vine to a distance of 600 to 800 mm from the plant. Animal Manure can be used in place of the above two fertilisers.

Cardboard or
Shredded Paper

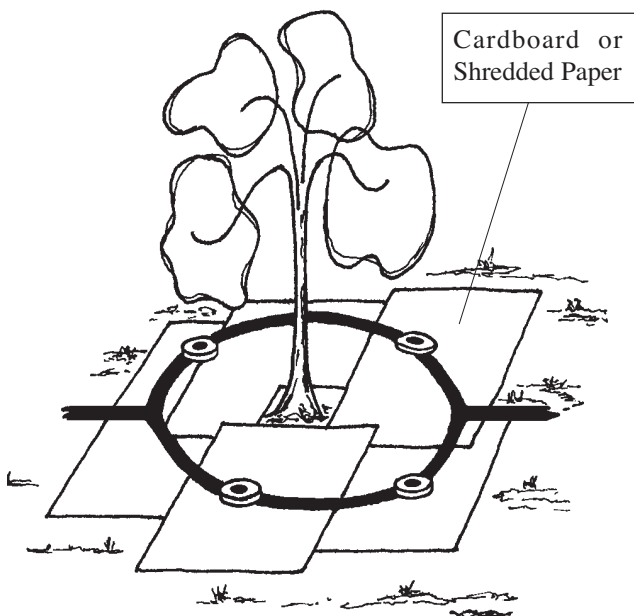


Fig 3

Lay sheets of cardboard or shredded paper under the drip pipe and on top of the Blood and Bone or Densified Poultry Manure. Cover an area from the base of the tree or vine out to a distance of 1 metre. If shredded paper is being used, make it about 250 mm deep. Keep the area around the base of the tree clear so the stem won't suffer from collar rot.

Grass and
Weeds or
Creek Sand

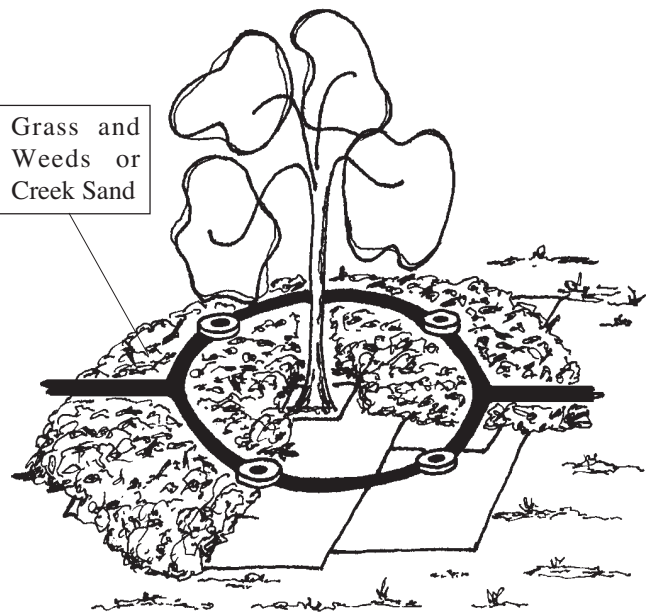


Fig 4

Cover the cardboard or shredded paper with dry grass or weeds to a depth of 250 mm keeping the area around the base of the tree or vine clear to prevent collar rot. The drip pipe should be on top of the grass and weeds. If these materials are not available, then use creek sand on top of the cardboard or shredded paper to prevent it from being blown away. Soak the new mulch with water so the bacteria can begin working under the cardboard. Put some earthworms under the cardboard 4 weeks after making the mulch. As the mulch breaks down repeat the above process.