

# ***Preparing Planting Areas With Cardboard, Mulch, and Driftwood***

*By Tatiana Havill of Wild Pollinator Gardens*

## **Cardboard & Mulch**

- Use cardboard and mulch to suppress weeds, especially grass/lawns
- At first, cardboard serves as a barrier to block weeds from sunlight. After 2-6 months during the rainy season, the cardboard composts into the soil, allowing desired plants to thrive/spread
- Helpful alternative to using landscape fabric or plastic, which does not break down and causes many issues long-term and adds micro-plastics to the soil
- Effective way to turn any weedy area into a planting area for native plants
- Collect cardboard from dumpsters near local businesses - bike, appliance, and auto stores often have large pieces - ask at the counter and usually they are willing to help!
- Be aware: cardboard + mulch method is less effective in very wet areas that get flooded with water - the cardboard breaks down very quickly
- Use fine/small bark mulch (with no dyes or additives!) which composts more quickly and builds soil, allowing natives to spread out and establish
- Use cardboard + arborist wood chips for keeping areas clear of weeds, best for pathways – can also be used to mulch around plants

## **Method:**

1. Dig out these invasive as much as possible BEFORE applying cardboard + mulch: Crocosmia, Himalayan blackberry, ivy, Japanese knotweed, three cornered Leek (Wild Onion), cotoneaster, large woody shrubs that sprout from stump
2. Prepare area by trimming down weeds and grass if necessary
3. Remove tape/plastic from cardboard and dispose
4. Cover with 3-4 inches of fine bark mulch
5. Best to wait a few months before planting to let everything settle, but not required

## **Planting:**

1. Sweep away mulch from planting area
2. Cut hole in cardboard dig planting hole, and plant
3. Spread a thin layer of mulch around the exposed soil to cover the cardboard edges. Be careful not to pile mulch against the stem/leaves of the plant!
4. Always water very gently and thoroughly after planting
5. Maintenance: over time, replenish mulch in areas where it gets thin

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### **Sourcing Mulch**

- Fine/small bark mulch is available at Oregon Overseas Timber in Bandon
  - To cover 80 sq. ft with 4 inches of mulch = 1 cu. yd of mulch
  - Usually \$10/cu. yd = 1 small pickup truck load
  - Usually \$5/cu. yd when buying bulk (10+ cu. yds) = typically 1 dumptruck load
  - Call the supplier for recommendations for delivery and prices – usually around \$100 for delivery + cost of mulch
- To get free arborist wood chips, contact a local arborist
  - Ask about tree species included in woodchips—avoid invasive trees and allow to compost thoroughly before using chips from allopathic trees: black walnut, eucalyptus, myrtlewood, etc.

### **Driftwood, Logs, and Branches**

#### **Sourcing:**

- Can be easily foraged for free from local beaches
- South Jetty Beach or similar beaches with parking close to the beach
- Legal to collect driftwood from the beach, 1 cu. yd per day
- Do not collect driftwood that is embedded in the sand or surrounded with plants, it can disturb habitat!
- Logs and branches can be sourced from tree trimming jobs

#### **Design & Uses:**

- Wood pieces provide ecological and aesthetic value
- Use them as borders to define garden beds
- Create elevation/slopes by piling soil against a large piece of wood
- Create focal points and lead the eye through the garden
- Dig into the surface of the mulch/soil and place the wood slightly below ground level, to stabilize the piece and create a more natural feeling placement
- Use them as windbreaks to protect young plants as they establish

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