

CREATING GARDEN PATHWAYS

Garden pathways are spaces for people to walk and work in the garden without stepping on the planting beds and compacting the soil. Clearly laid paths make maintenance and harvesting easier and can help prevent grass from growing into beds. Pathways can also add beauty and order to your garden.



TIPS FOR PREPARING LOW MAINTENANCE PATHWAYS:

Both of these methods require using weed barrier. See box on right for options of low cost weed barriers. Weed barrier should be permeable (meaning water can pass through) so you don't have a drainage problem. Avoid using plastic because there is no way for water to drain through it.

SIMPLE PATHWAYS FOR GARDENS

- Using string and stakes, identify the areas where planting beds and pathways will be in your garden. Path widths can vary from 1 to 4 feet. If you are anticipating a lot of foot traffic make sure your pathways are wide enough to accommodate gardeners and guests.
- Prepare new planting beds before starting pathways.
- After your planting beds are prepped start pathways by laying weed barrier down on the ground in the area designated for paths, removing or cutting the vegetation back as short as possible.
- Dig a small thin trench (4-6 inches deep) alongside the weed barrier to prevent grass and weeds from creeping into your pathways.
- Place a thick layer of mulch, ideally 4-6 inches, on top of weed barrier and wet the mulch and weed barrier thoroughly to settle both into place. Some of the mulch may fall into the trench.
- Refresh your mulch once or twice a season to avoid weeds finding their way through.

VARIATIONS FOR MARKET GARDENS

- Market gardens and production focused urban farms typically choose more narrow (1 foot to 18 inches), flexible paths than the ones described above.
- To get started, remove all grass and vegetation from both planting areas and pathways.
- In the area where the paths will be, remove 4-6 inches of soil and toss the soil removed from pathways onto your planting beds. This will increase the soil depth of your beds and create a defined area to walk.
- Lay a temporary barrier to walk on, like cardboard or coffee bags, and skip adding the mulch.

LOW COST WEED BARRIERS

NEWSPAPER: Lay out 6-8 layers of paper over path area. If it's a windy day use rocks to hold them down while you arrange the newspapers in your desired design. Water down the paths with hose or watering can to hold them place. Avoid using glossy print or color paper which may contain harmful dyes. Newspaper decomposes over time.

CARDBOARD: Local businesses usually throw away lots of cardboard boxes each day, consider asking them if you can take some for your garden. Use a razor blade to cut cardboard to the shape you want. Place 1-2 layers of cardboard down to create your pathways, again overlapping for best results.

BURLAP (COFFEE BAGS): Burlap sacks (coffee bags), are great for pathways. The Garden Resource Program has a limited supply of burlap coffee bags, which are available for cluster active participants at cluster tool banks. Some garden centers and home improvement stores also sell burlap.

Note: all of these options can be covered in wood mulch or shredded leaves to keep the weed barrier in place.



This Resource Guide is prepared by Keep Growing Detroit for participants in the Garden Resource Program. For more info please contact 313-757-2635, keepgrowingdetroit@gmail.com or visit our website at WWW.DETROITAGRICULTURE.NET