

## Clearing a new plot

There are a number of approaches to clearing a new plot for vegetable beds. The best one depends on the starting point.

For a very overgrown plot it is best to use a weed suppressing material mulch. This should be used to cover the plot preferably for six months or more. The ideal time to put the mulch down is in the summer so that the plot may be cultivated the following spring. Old carpets or other discarded heavy sheeting is a 'green' option; alternatively woven weed control fabric can be used and is preferable to black polythene. These materials will weaken or even kill perennial weeds.



Where the weed growth is lighter an organic mulch is a possibility. This usually consists of a layer of cardboard topped with straw or grass cuttings. The mulch needs to be topped up at regular intervals over the growing season. The worms help to compost the material and enhance the fertility.

Another way is to slice the turf from the paths and turn it over, on top of the bed, then spread a thick layer of farmyard manure, if more soil is available from elsewhere this can be used to top off the bed. This method is appropriate where the soil is shallow. If the turf contains couch or other perennial weeds this method should be avoided.



In many situations the best way is to dig the bed. Where there are perennial weeds the weeds should all be dug out and disposed of. Couch roots should be drowned before putting on the compost heap.



Where there are no perennial weeds the turf can be removed and composted or it can be buried in the bed; double digging is a useful way of doing this.

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