



ask the landscape professional

Celebrating 21 Years!
Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or
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Question this Week: My husband is getting ready to install a new planting area in front of our house and just came back from the store with a roll of landscape cloth. I seem to recall, you have written about that before, but I can't locate the article. Can you remind me?...Joyce

Linda's Answer:

Certainly. If you are ever looking for one of my Ask The Landscape Professional articles, you can go to my website www.SprigsandTwigs.net where you will find over 200 listed in the "Learn" section in a key word searchable format.

Here is the story about landscape fabric. Somewhere along the line, it became hugely popular for many people and landscape companies to use landscape cloth as a so-called "weed barrier". Using landscape fabric is actually a gardening myth that does more harm than good and creates maintenance nightmares. Here's why.



Don't use landscape cloth; it's a waste of money and harmful to your garden.

1. Landscape fabric inhibits water from getting to the roots of your plants. With fabric, plants are forced to grow roots along the surface directly under the fabric to get water. Plants will struggle and many will eventually die,
2. Mulch generally is applied on top of landscape fabric. The landscape fabric isolates the mulch from the soil below preventing the mulch from decomposing. Often, mulch turns into a solid block. This is exactly what you don't want to have happen. In a healthy garden, an inch of mulch should decompose every year and be replaced,
3. As far as landscape cloth being a weed barrier, it turns out that many, if not most weeds get into your garden through the air. They blow around the neighborhood and land in your garden; once there, they grow downward through the landscape cloth. Once weeds get rooted into and through the landscape cloth, they are next to impossible to remove without ripping up the landscape cloth and making a big mess.
4. Landscape cloth makes your garden look bad. It seems everywhere you look; you see unsightly landscape cloth that is flapping in the breeze in someone's garden.

When it comes to weed control, use 2-3" of shredded bark, organic natural (non-dyed) mulch. Mulch keeps the soil cool, allows moisture to reach the roots of your plants, decomposes about 1 inch of thickness each year and adds organic matter to the soil. Weeds that do grow are easily removed. Refresh your mulch 1" each year to help keep the weeds down. Never use more than 2-3" of mulch and don't create "mulch volcanos" with the mulch piled up against the base of plants and trees.

Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 21 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

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