



STEP 2

MAINTENANCE

Mulch

Organic

Organic mulch is formerly living or living mulch (ground cover plants). Wood and leaf mulch applied at a depth of 2 inches around perennials and 3 to 4 inches around shrubs and trees helps keep weeds under control. It also has other [benefits](#). Do not place mulch all the way up to the base of plants; this will keep stalks, stems, or trunks too moist and will lead to rot or disease.



a) Wood/Bark Mulch

Citizens can pick-up free [woodchip mulch](#) provided by the City of Edmonton. Large bark pieces will be more appropriate in beds with large plants, such as shrubs and trees, and will look out of proportion with a perennial bed. Very fine bark mulch breaks down quicker and, if in a high wind area, can blow around. Don't be afraid to incorporate two different sizes within your yard; it can provide more visual interest.

b) Leaf Mulch

You can crush dry leaves into mulch by running your lawn mower over them (there are also attachments to convert your lawn mower into a leaf mulcher) and using it to topdress your planting beds. This mulch breaks down quickly and adds beneficial organic matter to your soil. Do not just add full leaves to the bed and do not use leaves that are infected with fungal disease. A bonus of this mulch: you do not have to dispose of all your fall leaves!

c) Green Mulch

Green mulch (ground cover plants) is another way to reduce weed invasion . If there is no exposed soil left, weeds have a more difficult time infiltrating a planting mass to take hold. This method is more about creating a plant community.



Inorganic

Another trend is to use ornamental rock mulches in planting beds. This requires installing landscape fabric beneath the rock. Use commercial grade fabric for durability and for the best weed control. It will never completely prevent weeds, as dust and dirt can collect on top of the weed barrier, providing a medium for weeds to grow in.

Ornamental rock can add another layer of visual appeal but it is important to note that it heats up the ground and plants and is not recommended for surrounding native perennials. A leaf blower or, if the rock is large enough, a shop vacuum are handy ways to remove leaves and evergreen needles from this mulch.