

## Purchasing Mulch and Soil

**When to Purchase Loose from a Bulk Supplier and When to Purchase in Bags from a Hardware Store or Garden Center:** Bulk suppliers of mulch and soil (or sand or other landscaping materials) are economical if you need 2 or more cubic yards of mulch or soil. Most companies will not deliver less than 2 cubic yards of material anyway, so getting the bags of mulch or soil at your local hardware store or big box store is the way to go if you need less than two cubic yards.

**How to decide how much mulch or soil you need-** You would use a material calculator. There are many material calculators online. Here's a link to a good one:

<http://www.mainslandscapesupply.com/material-calculator/>

Or just Google: "Mains Landscape supply material calculator"

You will need to know the total square footage of the area you are using the material for. For instance, if you need mulch for a garden bed that is 6 feet by 20 feet

6' width multiplied by 10' length = 60 square feet

You also want to know the depth at which you are laying the material (in inches)

Let's say you want the mulch 2 inches thick over the bed.

Plug your figures into the material calculator and it will tell you how many cubic yards you need.

### Cost Comparisons:

The size of most bagged mulch at the hardware stores and big box stores is 2 cubic feet per bag.

1 cubic yard is 27 cubic feet

To get 1 cubic yard of mulch you would need to buy 13.5 bags of mulch

at the average of \$3.00 per bag, that would cost, after tax, around \$45.00. It would also cost you gas money to get to and from the store and it would also cost you your time, whatever that is worth to you.

One cubic yard of mulch, on average, at a bulk supplier is around \$30.00 Retail.

Delivery is on average \$50.00.

That would be \$80.00 for one cubic yard of mulch from a bulk supplier vs. \$45.00 plus your time if you buy it bagged at the store.

Two cubic yards would cost between \$80.00 and \$90.00 to get bagged mulch at the store.

Two cubic yards would cost \$110.00 through the bulk supplier.

So, it is still less costly in strictly cash terms to get two cubic yards through the store than have two cubic yards wholesale delivered.

But then you have to start thinking of the weight and volume of all that material and ask how you are going to get 27 bags (2 cubic yards), or 41 bags (3 cubic yards) from the store to your house. If you have a pickup truck, that's great. But if you have a pickup truck, you can also just go to the wholesaler and get the mulch at a cheaper price and you won't be paying for delivery.

So, to make sure you are not spending more than you have to, do the math!

Remember that soil is much heavier than mulch and vehicles not rated for heavy loads cannot handle a lot of weight on their suspensions, so getting soil delivered by a company with a truck, even if you only need 2 cubic yards, is the way to go.

**TIP if you need soil:** Remember that your entire property is made of soil and if you need more soil in one part of your yard, you can often find another spot in your yard to "steal" that soil from!

**When you order from the wholesaler/bulk mulch and soil company:**

The mulch or soil is delivered in a truck and dumped on your property, usually the driveway, for distribution by another party, either yourself or your hired landscape contractor. If you simply cannot spread the mulch yourself and you do not have or will not hire someone to do it, some mulch and soil companies will spread the material in your garden beds for you- but you have to ask each company if they offer that service.

Also, the bulk suppliers listed below do allow you to make a pick up of loose mulch and soil if you have your own truck with which to haul the materials away. You would simply drive up to the office, pay for your order and they will load your truck with a front-loader.

Since mulch and soil suppliers only deliver whole numbered quantities of material (1 Cu. Yard, 2 cu. Yards, etc..) and do not deliver fractions of a cubic yard (1.5 cu. Yards, 2.5 cu. Yards, etc...), you will want to round up your number of cu. Yards. If the calculator tells you that you need 2.45 cubic yards, just purchase 3 cubic yards. It's not a bad idea to have extra mulch or soil for other projects on down the line.

Go to the distributor's web pages below to view their different available mulches and soils. There are many different kinds of mulches for different applications and purposes and many different kinds of soil mixes to choose from. Before you purchase, ask your hired landscape contractor or gardener which kind you need or tell the distributors what you need the mulch or soil for and they should guide you to the appropriate product.

## Local Suppliers of Bulk Mulch and Soil

**American Mulch Producers**

Mulch, soil  
19400 W. Eight Mile Rd.  
Southfield, MI 48075  
248 358 4440  
<http://wholesalemulchpile.com/>

**Mains Landscape Supply**

Mulch, soil, decorative stone, gravel, pebble, sand, landscaping supplies and hardscaping supplies  
21355 Telegraph Road  
Southfield MI 48033  
248 356 8660  
<http://www.mainslandscapesupply.com/>

**Angelo's Site One Landscape Supply**

Mulch, soil, landscaping supplies, hardscaping supplies  
29820 W. 8 Mile Road  
Farmington MI  
1-800 264 3562  
<http://angelos-supplies.com/>

**Eagle Landscaping and Supply Co.**

20779 Lahser Road  
Southfield MI 48033  
248 356 4342  
<http://www.eaglelandscapesupply.com/>

## Fertilizer Facts

### What is the three-figure ratio on fertilizer products, the “NPK” ratio

the “NPK” ratio is percentage by weight of the product of  
**Nitrogen – Phosphorous – Potash** (potassium)

What are the very basics of these?

**Nitrogen** is a major component of chlorophyll, a plants means of turning sunlight into energy. Plants use sunlight energy to produce sugars from water and carbon dioxide. It is also a major component of amino acids. Without nitrogen, a plant cannot make the proteins, amino acids and DNA that are necessary for cell development.

Lack of **nitrogen** shows up as “yellowing” of the plant.

Ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate, or sulfur-coated urea are chemical sources of nitrogen, added to the soil in chemical fertilizers.

#### **Organic sources:**

- Composted manure
- Planting a green manure crop, such as borage
- Nitrogen fixing plants like peas or beans.
- Adding coffee grounds to the soil

### **P**hosphorous

critical for cell division and the development of new tissue  
root growth and development  
root heartiness  
dormancy heartiness  
hastens vegetative state maturity

#### **natural sources of phosphorous**

- bone meal
- rock phosphate
- compost

### **K** potash ( $K^2O$ )

mined or manufactured potassium of sulfates, nitrates, magnesia, and chlorides  
essential for water uptake

Good for bigger fruits and blooms. Add a higher potash percentage fertilizer, mid season, or mid-cycle, to plants just before bloom period. Work into soil around the roots, at a depth of at least the root ball depth of the plant.

#### **natural sources of potash**

- Kelp
- Wood ash
- Green sand

Potash lowers acidity so it's not good in high amounts for acid loving plants like azaleas, hydrangeas, and rhododendrons

**Mycorrhizal fungi** – a Mycorrhiza is a symbiotic relationship between soil fungi and a plant's root system. A mycorrhizal fungi can transport nutrients anywhere through soil because THEY ARE THE LARGEST ORGANISMS on earth and one organism can span acres. Plant roots cannot reach all concentrations of nutrient sources. So the mycorrhizal fungi transport and deposit concentrations of nutrients and minerals at the plant's rhizosphere, or simply put, within reach of the plants root system. In exchange, the plant feeds and sustains the fungi. The mycorrhizal association is important for:

1. Sugar and water exchange between the plants roots and its environment
2. Disease, drought and salinity (harmful buildup of salts
- 3..resistance to insects through rhizal fungi "warning signals"
4. colonization of barren soil
5. resistance to toxicity

Many fertilizers come enhanced with mycorrhizal and other beneficial bacteria. There are also products that are primarily mycorrhizal.

sources:

gardening know [how.com](http://www.gardeningknowhow.com)

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/soil-fertilizers/using-potash-in-garden.htm>

grow it [organically.com](http://www.grow-it-organically.com)

<https://www.grow-it-organically.com/organic-phosphorus-fertilizers.html>

Wikipedia- mycorrhiza

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycorrhiza>

Fine Gardening.com

<http://www.finegardening.com/article/mycorrhizae-help-feed-your-plants>

### Some fertilizers I use:

**Espoma Plant-tone fertilizers.** Espoma manufactures a wide range of organic fertilizer solutions for a garden's different needs. Some are geared for vegetables, some for acid loving plants such as azaleas, hydrangea, and Holly, some are formulated specifically for roses, some for tomatoes. To see their full line of dedicated organic granular fertilizers go to their web site

<https://www.espoma.com/>

**Monterey Fish and Bat Guano-** promotes vigorous vegetative, foliar growth.

**Earth Worm Castings (worm poop)-** enriches the soil with all the nutrients plants need with the additional benefit that it improves soil aeration when mixed down into the soil. Worm castings also act as a natural pest repellent of mites and aphids.

**Maxicrop Liquid Seaweed-** bolsters a plants defense against the stress of drought, transplant, frosts, pests and disease. Can be used in solutions for vegetables, lawn, flowering plants, shrubs, etc.

**Garden Rich Root and Grow-** High in phosphorous, Root and Grow is best used when transplanting plants and starting plants because of its dedicated formula for the development of strong roots.