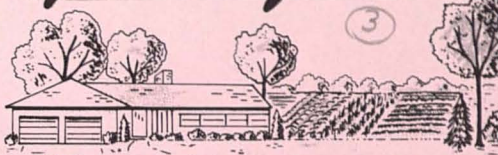


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Yard 'n' Garden



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SUMMER MULCHES

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One of the ways to make gardening easier and more successful is to use mulches. A mulch will control weeds, conserve moisture, keep the soil cool and keep the garden produce clean.

One of the common causes of blossom-end rot of tomatoes is root pruning through cultivation. When roots are cut off, the plants suffer from lack of moisture. Mulches will tend to prevent this problem.

Several materials are available for mulches. Ground corn cobs, sawdust, grass clippings, peat moss and finely chopped straw are some examples. Apply the mulch to a depth of 2 or 3 inches around the plants and between the rows in mid-July. If applied soon after a rain or watering, it will conserve that moisture over a long period.

Recently black plastic has been used as a garden mulch. Use either 3 or 4-foot wide strips of the material between rows of seeded crops or transplant and seed through cuts made in the plastic at desired spacings. Hold the plastic down by a ridge of soil along the edge on each side. Plastic is especially good for strawberries, tomatoes, cucumbers and melons.

If foliage of plants grown in a mulch becomes yellow, it indicates nitrogen competition. This condition can easily be corrected by adding either ammonium nitrate or a complete fertilizer over the mulch.

If slugs become troublesome secure a metaldehyde bait. Follow directions on the container. Often, early control of slugs will prevent a problem later in the season.

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