

# How To Install Gravel or Mulch



Complete step by step “How-to” guide for installing gravel or mulch for beds.

## **Tools & Materials Required**

- Landscape Fabric & Securing pins (if overlapping fabric)
- Shovel (Garden Spade and Flat-Bladed)
- Garden Rake
- Wheelbarrow
- Work Gloves
- Safety Glasses
- Gravel or Mulch
- Edging

## **Choosing Your Gravel or Mulch**

When choosing the gravel or mulch you will be installing, keep in mind the surrounding landscape colors, shading and moisture.

Try to picture what color will contrast the surrounding area. Obtain samples of the product to bring home so you can see how it looks on-site. Stone Plus will offer small samples for that purpose.

## **Where To Begin**

First thing to do is to determine how much material you need. You will need to measure the width and length of all the areas you will be filling with the gravel or mulch, in order to calculate square footage. When possible do all measurements in feet. If you need to use inches make sure you measure both width and length in inches. Multiply width by length. This will give you square inches or square feet. To convert from square inches to square feet simply divide the square inches by 144. Once you have the total square footage and decide the depth you want, you can calculate how much material is needed.

The depth needed is dependent on the material chosen. Mulch and gravel under 1-1/2" in size will need to be 2-1/2" deep. Gravel 1-1/2" to 2" will need to be 3" deep, and 2" to 4" gravel needs to be 4" deep. This is to provide complete coverage and so you cannot see the landscape fabric (weed-mat) through the gaps in the gravel. Refer to the coverage table (Fig. 1). You will need to take the total square footage and divide by one of the factors in order to calculate the total cubic yards of material to order.

For example, for 1" gravel, you would want 2-1/2" depth for proper coverage. In that case divide your total square footage by 129.6. The result is the total cubic yards you need. Round off to next higher 1/4 cubic yard. (Most suppliers sell in 1/4 yard increments). For 3" depth, divide by 108, and so on. If you plan on purchasing bags or buckets you can convert from cubic yards to bags or buckets using the conversion info (Fig. 1). For example, to find number of bags, multiply the cubic yards by 54. For 5 Gal. buckets, multiply cubic yards by 36.

## How To Install Gravel or Mulch (cont'd)

### Preparing The Bed Area

Next step is to prepare the bed area. If you are removing sod to make a new bed, cut the sod cleanly around the outside border of the bed. Dig down about 4" around the perimeter to provide room for a border material such as Oly-Ola Black Jack or Super Edge vinyl edging. There are many different edging materials available including vinyl, metal, stone and concrete products. If you decide to use stone or concrete products you may need to adjust the bed depth to accommodate the height.

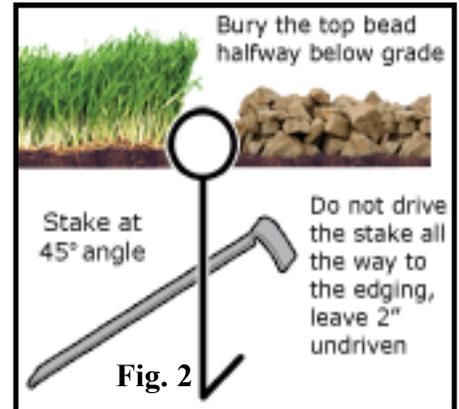
Install your border first. Follow instructions for the type of border you purchased. The most commonly used border is the Black Jack vinyl edging (see Fig. 2).

After securing the entire border, the next step is to install the landscape fabric. Choose a good quality fabric, such as Fabriscape 3.1 oz. or heavier. Fabric comes in various widths, typically 3', 4' and 6' wide. Stone Plus will cut a roll to any length desired, from 1' to 250'.

Lay out the fabric and overlap any seams by at least 6" and secure the seams with securing pins (see Fig. 3). Pins come in packs of 15 or bulk. Place pins approximately 3' to 4' apart. This will help prevent the fabric from spreading apart under the weight of the material on top. If you have plants already in the ground you can cut X shaped slits in the fabric and place over the plants (see Fig. 4). If you're adding plants later, you can simply cut an X opening and dig into the soil to make room, place the plants in, then wrap the fabric as tight around the plants as possible.

Now it's time to spread your gravel or mulch. You will want at least 2-1/2" thick coverage for mulch and gravel under 1-1/2" in size. Place small piles at random locations around the bed using a wheelbarrow. Then spread using a garden rake. Try to maintain a uniform depth to maximize your coverage. Do not pile material high around the border. Try to keep it fairly even with the edging material.

For stone, when done raking you should rinse it off with a hose to clear away any dust to expose the full color.



#### Helpful Conversions:

- (54) 1/2 Cubic Foot Bags = 1 Cubic Yard
- (36) .75 Cu.Ft. 5 Gal. Buckets = 1 Cubic Yard
- (9) 3 Cubic Foot Bags = 1 Cubic Yard
- (13.5) 2 Cubic Foot Bags = 1 Cubic Yard

#### Bulk Material Coverage:

- 1 Cubic Yard of gravel, dirt or mulch covers:
  - 162 Square Feet at 2 Inch Depth
  - 129.6 Square Feet at 2-1/2 Inch Depth
  - 108 Square Feet at 3 Inch Depth
  - 81 Square Feet at 4 Inch Depth

Coverage based on exact, flat depths. We recommend that you add an extra 5% to be sure you have enough to fill in any dips or holes in the ground and to account for any uneven spreading.

**Fig. 1**

**Important:**

From load to load of gravel and mulch, color can vary. It is always in the best interest to purchase all of the material you need at the same time to ensure the color matches.

Stone Plus, and their employees, do not claim to be professional landscape instructors or installers. These installation techniques are suggestions that tend to work with great success.

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