



Introducing Project Cultivate

- Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (SMCT) is exploring ways to sustainably enhance and manage our horticultural assets at our historic and heritage sites, with the environment and the future in mind.
- A program of works at Melbourne General Cemetery (MGC) known as Project Cultivate, is covering around 53% of the site.
- Project Cultivate aims to convert many currently unplanted monumental areas of the cemetery into a flourishing native grassland through the application of 5400m³ of organic mulch and 500,000 indigenous plants.

For more information about Project Cultivate, please visit our website at smct.org.au/cultivate or contact us at community@smct.org.au

Mulch – the foundation of a sustainable landscape

To say SMCT is excited about mulch is an understatement. While it may seem like 'mulch ado about nothing', we know that mulching is just the first, vital step in creating a truly sustainable, biodiverse environment at Melbourne General Cemetery for generations to visit and enjoy.

Why do we need to mulch?

In the world of gardening, a healthy, sustainable environment is more than just the plants. It starts with the soil - and this is where the mulch comes in. The soil currently found throughout much of the cemetery is challenging. Most of the potential planting areas are covered by heavily compacted clay soils with little to no topsoil, making it difficult for plants to survive and thrive.

What sort of mulch is being used?

Project Cultivate uses tree-loppers mulch, sometimes known as bush mulch, laid to a depth of 5cm. This mulch is a by-product of tree removal and pruning operations from both native and exotic trees (that's why the mulch has different colours) and is ideal for Project Cultivate.

- The mixed particle sizes allow efficient rainfall penetration, effective weed suppression and variable decomposition rates, which equals long term soil improvement.
- Tree-loppers mulch is free from herbicides, pesticides, insecticides, and is not harmful to the environment.
- This mulch most closely replicates what would have once been found across this site before it became a cemetery, and is ideal for the native grasses and wildflowers to flourish.
- It's super sustainable – we are giving new life to a waste product, which in turn is giving new life to our soils, and our site.

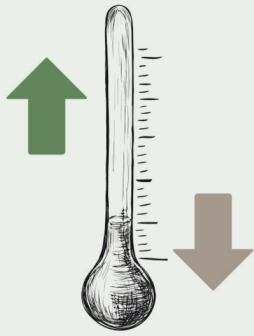
How is the mulch being applied?

Home gardeners may be used to mulch laid a bit thicker, around 7cm, which is fine for an irrigated site with healthy soil and established plants. Melbourne General Cemetery is unirrigated and has poor soil conditions.

To ensure the native seedlings (tube stock) have a good chance of survival we're planting at a mulch depth of 5cm. This means our plants will establish well in the soil, and we still get all of the marvellous mulch benefits listed above.



Applying the right organic mulch, whether in a home garden or a larger landscape like Melbourne General Cemetery, has many benefits:



Minimises soil temperature fluctuations

Mulch reduces evaporation and minimises temperature fluctuations in the soil.



Saves water

Mulch allows the soil to retain more moisture, contributing to healthy plant growth, and reduced run off and soil erosion.



Contributes to biodiversity

Mulch helps to build homes for beneficial insects, lizards and even birds.



Makes soil healthier

Mulch adds organic matter, nutrients and structure to soils, making soils healthier over time.



Supresses weed growth

This reduces an unsustainable reliance on herbicides.



5,400m³ of mulch

Throughout Project Cultivate, we have installed 5400m³ of organic mulch as the first step to revitalising the soil. That's the equivalent of 54,000 wheelbarrow loads.