

The 4th C: Cover the Soil

A bare soil is a vulnerable soil. Keep all soil covered, all year round.

Your soil needs to be protected, so that its environment is not too hot, too cold, too wet, or too dry. Your invisible underground workforce will be as productive as possible when you provide them with a safe environment. Here are some tips for shielding your soil.

- **The best cover is a growing plant.** Of course, that may not always be possible between plantings, or when your plants are very young and don't cover much area, so check out the options below.
- **You can cover bare soil with plant residues, compost, or organic mulches.** These materials will both protect your soil and feed your critters.
- **You can also use inorganic mulches,** such as stones, crushed rock or brick, or plastic weed-block. These materials don't feed your critters, but they do protect them. These options are often better suited for perennial plants, such as shrubs and trees, than for garden veggies or annual flowers.
- **Some veggie gardeners like to use corrugated cardboard.** You can cover the entire bed, cutting holes where you want to plant seedlings or place seeds. The cardboard protects the soil, keeps weeds at bay, and eventually breaks down and feeds your underground workforce.
- **Don't remove your annual plants in the fall.** If you want to make the garden appear less messy and more attractive, you can cut your plants and leave them on the soil, perhaps mixed with leaves or other organic residues. *Leave the roots in the soil, however: they are feeding your underground workforce!*



Cover the soil constantly
... one of the 6Cs for
Healthy Soil