BALCONY FOOD FACTORY

~~ Turn Your Balcony Into A Productive Food Garden By Maximizing Time, Space & Soil ~~

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You'll be sure to never miss any of our publications or any of my best container gardening tips and advice.

Also, as a welcome gift I have put together an eBook that I think you may find particularly useful: 5 High-Yield Container Setups for Small Balconies.

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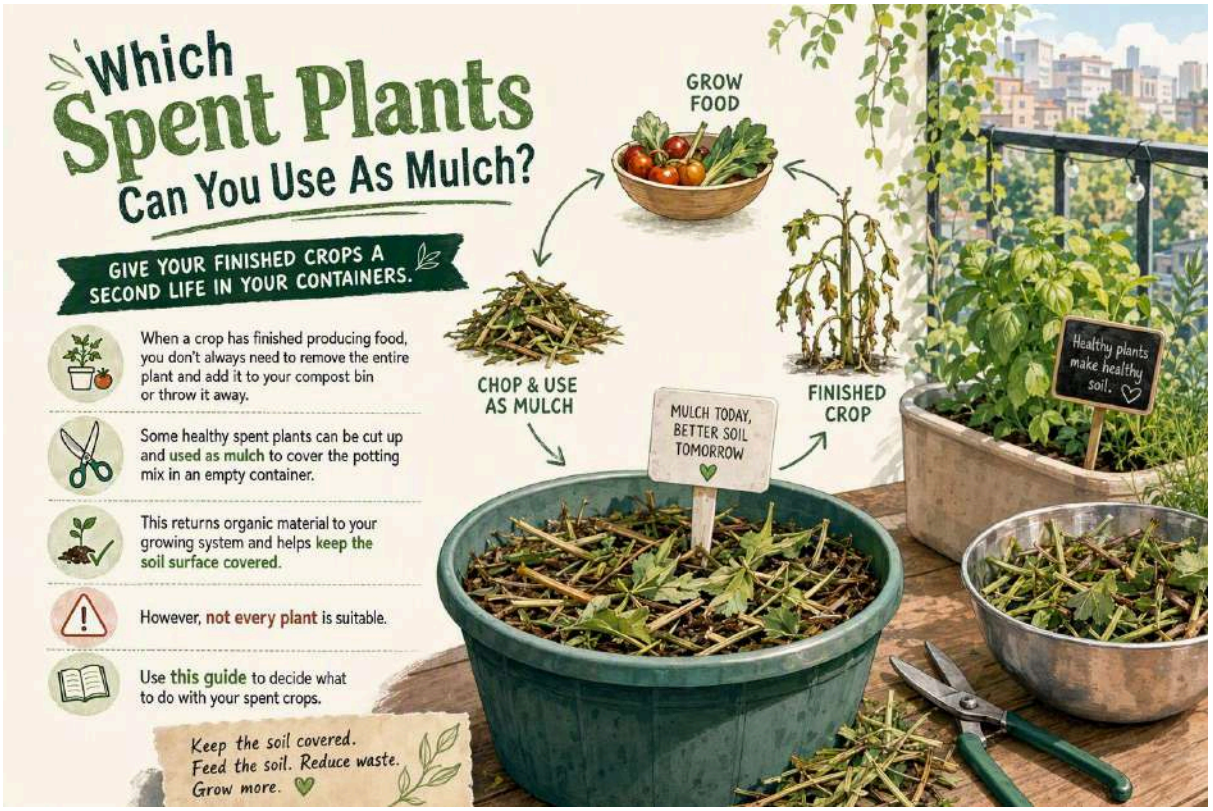
Which Spent Plants Can You Use As Mulch?



Give your finished crops a second life in your containers.

When a crop has finished producing food, you don't always need to remove the entire plant and throw it away.

Some healthy spent plants can be cut up and used as mulch to cover the potting mix in an empty container.

This returns organic material to your growing system and helps keep the soil surface covered.

However, not every plant is suitable.

Use this guide to decide what to do with your spent crops.

Good Crops To Use As Mulch

Use healthy plant material, cut it into smaller pieces where necessary, and spread it in a thin layer over the potting mix.

Avoid piling up thick, wet layers that may become slimy or start to rot.

Crop	When To Use It	Tips
Arugula (Rocket)	After flowering and going to seed	Breaks down quickly. Apply in a thin layer.
Swiss Chard	After harvesting or when leaves turn yellow	Chop thicker stems into smaller pieces.
Leaf Lettuce	When it bolts or at the end of the growing season	Its fine texture makes it useful for covering the soil.
Cilantro	After flowering or when a crop fails	Breaks down quickly and has a strong scent.
Mustard Greens	After flowering	Breaks down readily and may contribute to soil health.
Dill	After harvesting or flowering	Its airy structure breaks down quickly.
Basil	After the plant has finished growing or has flowered	Chop it up and avoid applying too much at once.
Spinach	When it bolts	Use a thin layer because it breaks down quickly.
Nasturtium	After flowering or the first frost	Chop the large leaves into smaller pieces.
Chives	Older leaves	Use small quantities to reduce the risk of a slimy layer forming.

Crops Better Not Used As Mulch

Some plants are better composted separately or handled in another way.

This is particularly important when disease may be present or when plant material is slow to break down.

Crop	Why To Avoid Using It As Mulch	Better Alternative
Tomato Plants	May carry diseases such as powdery mildew or late blight.	Compost only if the plants are healthy and your composting method is suitable.
Potato Plants	Can carry diseases, particularly potato blight.	Compost only if the plants are healthy and your composting method is suitable.
Beans And Peas	Their stems and foliage can be coarse and slow to break down.	Chop into smaller pieces or let the material dry before adding it to compost.
Cabbage Family Crops	Their residues can produce strong odors and may attract unwanted pests.	Compost them separately or consider bokashi composting.
Pumpkin And Zucchini (Courgette) Stems	Thick, fibrous stems can break down slowly and rot when left wet.	Compost rather than use them as mulch.
Onion And Garlic Tops	May develop mold and sometimes attract flies.	Dry them and add them to the compost in moderation.
Strongly Aromatic Herbs, Such As Rosemary And Sage	Their essential oils may slow decomposition, and damp material can develop mold.	Dry them and add them to the compost in moderation.

A Few Simple Rules

- **Use healthy plants.** Never use diseased or pest-infested material as mulch.
- **Keep it thin.** A light layer of chopped plant material is preferable to a thick, wet pile.
- **Give coarse material a head start.** Chop thick stems and large leaves into smaller pieces.
- **Choose the right destination.** When in doubt, compost the plant material instead of spreading it over your potting mix.

Make Every Crop Count

In a productive container garden, harvesting isn't necessarily the end of a plant's usefulness.

By reusing suitable plant material, you can keep your containers working as part of a simple, low-waste growing system.

Balcony Food Factory — Grow More Food In Less Space With Minimal Effort.

About Me

I’m Jim, the gardener behind Balcony Food Factory.

I’ve been growing food for decades, from allotments to my current 10th-floor balcony, where I’ve learned how to grow a surprising amount of food in a surprisingly small space.

Balcony Food Factory is where I share what I’ve learned about growing more food in containers, making the most of limited space, and keeping things practical and manageable.

Have any questions?

Anything I can help you with?

I would love to hear from you!

Email me: info@balconyfoodfactory.com

balconyfoodfactory.com



My New Book is out!

The Multi-Harvest Container System Starter Guide

