



Tips for laying the biodegradable mulches in in the Innovative Farmers trial



Laying the film using tractor equipment – what we are trying to mimic

- 1) It is often best to roll the bed before laying the mulch to press in any stones and to make sure it does not settle too much unevenly between laying the mulch and planting.
- 2) Dig a trench (approximately 20cm deep, 20 cm wide) across the bed at each end of the area to be mulched
- 3) Place one end of the mulch in a trench and back fill with soil
- 4) Pull the length of the mulch tight and bury the end in the second trench. The mulch is more robust than it looks as long as it is not damaged - take care not to tear it on anything sharp.
- 5) At least as a temporary measure, although these can be left in place as an extra precaution as the crops grow, lay some battens across the width of the mulch to stop it lifting in the wind.
- 6) Working along the mulch, first one side and then the other, bury the sides in soil. The idea is to simulate the effect of a tractor drawn implement. We found a hand trowel ideal, just to scrape the soil away push the mulch into the slit and backfill with the other had. It is not necessary to get it very deep but it does help if the soil is loose to start with. It might be

possible to get away with sticks and stones as weights alone but tucking the mulch in is much more secure.

7) Punch holes in the mulch to plant through - as the mulch stretches it is best to use something quite sharp rather than a normal dibber.

These are some pictures taken during the set-up of the Coventry University trials on Five Acre Farm.



Tucking in the edges of the mulch by using a trowel to create a narrow slit



Punching holes in the mulches using a sharp stick.

A board with holes drilled in it was used as a template to get the correct spacing.



The Coventry University trial site showing the various different types of mulches laid out and ready for planting (these included the commercial biodegradable plastic sent out for the Innovative Farmers trials, a translucent biodegradable plastic, Mypex, polythene and a paper mulch). In some cases wooden battens were laid on the mulches as an extra precaution to prevent them lifting in the wind.