

# Using Seagrass Wrack around the Garden



EDMUNDS BAY



## Using Seagrass Wrack around the Garden

Many people have noticed that as the health of seagrass in Edmunds Bay recovers, more wrack is drifting close to shore, where it may become trapped. Excessive wrack contributes to a loss of amenity for residents, particularly if it breaks down anaerobically (with little oxygen) in the water to add to organic ooze.

Seagrass wrack is an important asset in a natural estuarine habitat. Properly managed, it can also contribute to a healthy suburban garden.

### Did you know?

Seagrass wrack (the loose leaves that have fallen off seagrass plants) is 98% water, is high in minerals, and breaks down most efficiently when it is spread out on the shoreline and exposed to the air, wind and sun.

Most of us are familiar with the benefits of incorporating organic matter and mulch into our soils to improve their condition and structure; to retain moisture, replenish soil nutrients and suppress weeds. Some of you may already compost or use mulch as part of your garden routine; others may be keen to start.

Seagrass wrack can be a useful addition to garden compost and mulch. Residents are permitted to collect up to 20kg of seagrass wrack from the shoreline of their property each day. The following are suggestions for incorporating seagrass wrack into your home garden if you don't already do so.



### .... as part of a natural shoreline

Seagrass wrack and saltmarsh are valuable partners on low gradient estuarine shorelines. If you have small areas of saltmarsh along the foreshore of your property, a light cover of wrack will help sustain the saltmarsh, and keep weeds down at the same time as the wrack breaks down aerobically (in the air), with few odours. It also saves on mowing!

You can encourage the wrack and saltmarsh interaction by not building any vertical structures (walls) along the shoreline, by raking loose wrack in a thin cover and by weeding out lawn grasses and by planting additional saltmarsh plants. The spiky saltmarsh plants hold the wrack off the ground surface and help the wrack to break down quickly.

### .... in compost

Wrack can be used in compost in a mixture of 20 parts compost to 1 part wrack. Ratios of 10 parts compost to 1 part wrack have also been used. If the salt content of the wrack is low, a mixture of 5 parts compost to 1 part wrack can be used. For best results, it is recommended that you first wash the wrack thoroughly to remove the salt.

### .... as mulch

Rinse the wrack thoroughly first to remove the salt and then either:

- Apply direct to the garden
- Mix first with other mulch materials - the weight of the other material will help keep the wrack in place once it dries.
- Spread out thinly and allow to air dry, then apply direct to the garden
- Mow over the dewatered (dried) wrack and distribute over the garden.

### ....as a soil conditioner

Wash the wrack to reduce salt and simply fork it in (either wet or dry) and mix with the soil. This method would be particularly appropriate when preparing a new garden bed.

### .... as a drainage medium

Screen the wrack then mix it with potting mix prior to planting.

### ....but remember your health and safety comes first

It is important to be aware that seagrass wrack may contain non organic debris, contaminated material, rubbish such as glass and even discarded needles, so you must be vigilant when handling it and be aware of hygiene and safety risks. Thick gardening gloves should be used at all times and the wrack screened of foreign/non organic material before it is used on the garden or in compost mixes.