

# 7 Reasons Why Professionals Always Use Landscape Fabric Under Gravel

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Landscape fabrics have many uses in commercial and residential applications. These fabrics known as geotextiles are extremely helpful in keeping up with your landscape maintenance needs. This article will help you understand how to improve ground quality and extend the life of your next driveway, xeriscape (low water) garden, or gravel pathway project.

## The reasons you should use landscape fabric include:

- Landscape Fabric limits weed growth
- Geotextile fabric stabilizes the soil
- Weed barrier can help retain moisture in the soil
- Landscape Fabric reduces the amount of gravel required
- Fabric acts as a filter under the gravel
- Landscape Fabric is an integral part of garden ponds
- Separation layer prevents aggregate from migrating down into soil

## 1. Weeding – The Gardeners Bane

Let's face it. Nobody likes to pull weeds. Preventing weed growth is one of the top reasons for most landscape fabric installations. A good landscape fabric beneath a layer of pebbles or gravel goes a long way in preventing weed seed germination.

Even the best landscape fabric won't stop 100% of the weeds. Some seeds will inevitably germinate and sprout, however having a weed block barrier will keep the roots from getting a foothold in the soil. Without deep roots weeds are much easier to pull and less likely to establish and spread further.

Fewer weeds in and around your landscape also mean you need to use less herbicide for control. Using less herbicide saves money, effort, and is generally better for the overall environment.



Weed block fabric prevents the germination of weed vegetation in landscapes

**[Find our entire collection of Heavy Duty Weed Barrier Fabric here >](#)**

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## **2. Soil Stabilization - Keeping things in Place**

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Landscape fabric can also have a stabilizing effect on the soil beneath your gravel. If surface erosion is a problem, a landscape barrier under your gravel can help reduce the running water's effects. Keeping gravel in place is a big problem with some applications.

If your gravel path or landscape has slopes or contours, landscape fabric between the soil and the gravel can mitigate the effects of traffic and soil movement. Frost heave is common in colder climates and can move underground structures, and rocks from beneath the ground due to rapid freeze and thaw cycles.

By adding fabric beneath your path, or bed areas it can help mitigate this upward movement of rock and soil keeping your landscape looking great.

## **3. Soil Moisture – Keeping Water Where You Want It**

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If you use gravel as a mulch under and around your landscape plants, retaining soil moisture can be an issue. Gravel tends to collect heat and transmit the heat to the soil beneath. This process can cause rapid drying of the top layers of the soil and deprive your plantings of needed moisture.

A landscape fabric barrier between the soil and the gravel will insulate the ground from the extreme temperatures swings that may occur. A fabric barrier can also prevent some of the evaporation of soil moisture that can occur.

Geotextile fabric beneath your aggregate or mulch can also save you time and money. The need to water less frequently saves on manual labor and utility costs. Additionally many plants will appreciate the more moderate soil temperatures.



*landscape fabric under gravel mulch in a flower bed*

#### **4. More Savings Through Less Material**

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Most landscapers apply gravel to a depth of four to six inches on gravel paths. When the gravel is used as a mulch around plantings this is closer to four inches in depth. If a high-quality landscape fabric is installed between the soil and the gravel, these depths can be cut in half.

The reason for this is that fabric makes for a more uniform area to layout aggregate and less of the rock material will be lost to soil beneath.

Savings comes in the form of only needing half as much rock aggregate material.

#### **5. The Filtration Effect**

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Not all gravel used in garden or landscaping ends up as pathways or mulch. Some gravel is used to control drainage or water movement. In either case, landscape fabric has a part to play in creating systems such as:

- French drain systems
- Trench drains
- Dry creek beds
- Water features

French drains and trench drains collect water and move it via pipes away from the landscape area. These systems depend on round rock gravel around the perforated pipe. Landscape fabric provides filtration to prevent sand and soil from clogging the gravel and the perforated pipe in these systems.

Dry creek beds perform the same function but on the surface of the landscape. What looks like a pile of jumbled rocks in a low area through the landscape is water management system. At the bottom and the heart of these dry creek beds is a layer of gravel, usually stabilized by landscape fabric that channels the water.



*Nonwoven drainage fabric burrito wrapped around perforated pipe and drain rock*

**[Find Heavy Duty Nonwoven Drainage/Filter Fabric here >](#)**

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## **6. When You Need More Strength**

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Landscape fabric is perfect for applications like gravel pathways and driveways where strength is important. The primary way to add strength when constructing a gravel pathway or driveway is to install fabric on the graded ground underneath the aggregate. The additional support of fabric underneath the aggregate rock acts as a soil stabilizer and separates the soil below from the aggregate rock layer above.

By providing a separation layer it prevents the soil below from automatically turning into mud from heavy rains, and it reduces the potholes that are common from well worn areas.

Another application where fabric is used for added strength is for pond liners. Often pond installers will lay a barrier of landscape fabric under the pond liner as additional protection of the rubber liner, this helps protect the rubber pond liner from puncture. Additionally another layer of nonwoven fabric is placed on top of the pond liner where rocks and larger boulders are placed.

## **7. The Gravel Disappearing Act**

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Gravel installed without a barrier often disappears into the soil beneath it and this is especially true of frequently used gravel paths. The effects of weather, temperature, and traffic will cause the gravel to comingle with the soil and travel downwards. The gravel seems to perform a disappearing act and will constantly need to be maintained as more rock is required to keep up both functionality and looks.

A barrier of landscape fabric between the soil and the gravel will help prevent your gravel from performing this magic disappearing act. The landscape fabric controls the migration and travel of the soil and the gravel. The net effect is to reduce the amount of maintenance and to stop the continual need to add gravel as it disappears into the soil.

**PRO TIP:** Nonwoven Geotextile fabric is measured in weight (oz / sq. yd.) ranging from 2-16 ounces. Woven fabrics are typically measured in grab tensile (pull) strength.



*A gravel path with potholes and is losing gravel to the subgrade soil*

## **Pick the Right Fabric for you Project**

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The right landscape fabric for the intended job is critical. In general, you should consider the following when choosing landscape fabric for a project.

- Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations on where and how to use the landscape fabric.
- Woven geotextile fabrics typically are less permeable and work better around projects that require more strength and don't need water to flow through as much.  
Example: roads, driveways, and civil structural applications.
- Non-woven geotextile fabric barriers are great at weed suppression and drainage / filtration applications. These non-woven fabrics allow water and air to pass through easily and can help promote drainage and plant growth.
- Weight and Thickness should be considered. Heavier fabrics tend to last longer and are better at weed control, but lighter fabrics typically allow more water to flow.

## **Making the Most of Your Landscape Project**

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Gravel can be a great addition to any landscape design. It doesn't matter what kind of project you're designing, selecting the proper landscape fabric to support your work is important to reduce project cost, maintenance, and increase the life of your designs.

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