

PROPER MULCHING TECHNIQUE

Mulch is the material placed on the soil to conserve moisture and improve growing conditions. Common mulches include wood chips, bark, pine needles and compost. Organic mulches are preferred because they improve soil structure, add organic materials and provide nutrients.

Applying a 2-4 inch layer of organic mulch can mimic a more natural environment and improve tree health. However, if mulch is applied too deep or the wrong material is used, it can actually harm trees. The beginning of the root flare, the place where the trunk widens out to form roots, must remain visible. Avoid the lollipop look.

BENEFITS OF PROPER MULCHING

- Helps reduce soil moisture loss
- Controls weed and grass competition
- Protects the trunk from lawnmower & weed eaters
- Insulates soil, protecting roots from extreme summer and winter temperatures



PROPER MULCHING

- Check soil drainage in the area to be mulched.
- Most organic mulches work well in most landscape situations.
- Apply a 2 to 4 inch layer of mulch over well-drained soils. Use a thinner layer on poorly drained soils.
- Do not pile mulch against the tree trunk. Pull mulch back several inches from the trunk so the base of the trunk and root crowns is exposed. The mulch ring should resemble a “doughnut” not a “volcano”.
- Avoid using fresh wood chips that have piled without exposure to oxygen.
- Sawdust and straw are not recommended.

IF A LITTLE IS GOOD, THEN...

‘Volcano Mulching’ is an improper mulching technique where mulch is piled high against the tree trunk. Mulch should not touch the trunk of the tree. The trunk was simply no meant to be covered. Volcano mulching causes harmful effects on the tree’s health and will eventually kill the tree.



VOLCANO MULCHING:

- Promotes excessive soil moisture and root rot.
- Causes inner bark tissue to die
- Leads to insect and disease problems
- Creates habitat for rodents that chew the bark and girdles the stem
- Results in anaerobic conditions that produce alcohols and organic acids which are toxic
- Causes imbalances in soil pH
- Becomes a matted barrier that prevents the penetration of water and air

PLANTING BED AT TREE BASE

- The bark on the trunk of the tree is not intended to be covered by soil or mulch.
- Mulch or soil will cause damage and eventually kill the tree
- Composted wood chips make good mulch, especially when it contains a mixture of leaves, bark and wood
- Trees in Placing an elevated planting bed around the perimeter of trees has the same negative effect as volcano mulching.
- The tree may develop stem girdling roots or development of insect and disease problems.

