

Summer Tree Care Tips:

The Do's and Don'ts of Mulching



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BENEFITS OF MULCHING TREES

- * helps to retain moisture around the base of the tree
- * helps control weed and grass growth around the tree, which reduces plant competition
- * insulates the soil, protecting the tree from extreme temperatures
- * adds nutrients to the soil as the mulch decomposes
- * reduces the likelihood of damage from a lawn-mower or a weed-wacker
- * gives planting beds a well-cared for, uniform look

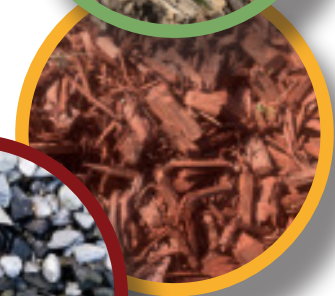
WHAT MULCH IS BEST?

Organic, shredded (double or triple), hardwood mulch breaks down over the course of a season or two, increases the soil's organic content to help beneficial bacteria thrive, and releases nitrogen into the soil to help plants grow.

Dyed wood mulch may have some aesthetic appeal, but dye leaches into the soil, harming beneficial bacteria and robbing the soil of nitrogen.

Inorganic Mulching with rocks, plastic barriers, or rubber should be avoided. These trap heat, don't allow proper oxygen exchange, and deprive trees of nutrients.

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HOW SHOULD MULCH BE APPLIED TO TREES?

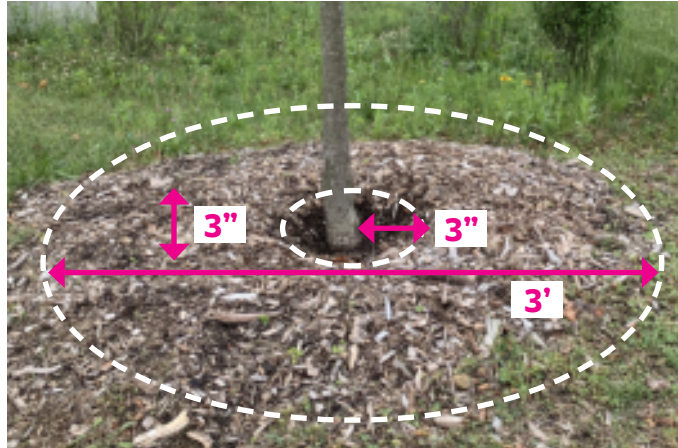
Follow the **3x3x3** rule!

Apply mulch...

No higher than **3 inches**

At least **3 feet** radially from the trunk

About **3 inches** (or a fist's width) from the trunk



Make a **DONUT** shape



Not a **VOLCANO!**

WHY IS VOLCANO MULCHING HARMFUL?

Mulch that is too high or too close to the trunk can cause problems that damage your tree over time.

Too much mulch can...

1. Smother the tree's roots, thus starving them of needed oxygen. In search for oxygen, the roots will often grow up through the mulch causing them to "girdle" around the trunk and cut off water supply.
2. Cause excess moisture to build up between the mulch and the tree's trunk. The excess moisture creates perfect conditions for root rot, which deteriorates the bark and creates an unstable foundation.

HOW TO FIX AN OVER-MULCHED TREE

Remove the mulch volcano by gently digging it away from the trunk with hand tools to expose the root flare, taking care not to harm the roots. If the amount of soil and mulch is significant enough, and there's evidence of problematic roots, consider a professional option such as air knife and root pruning.

AIR KNIFE AND ROOT PRUNING

Step 1:

An air knife removes the mulch/soil while keeping the roots intact and unharmed.

Step 2:

Problematic roots are pruned and removed. Problem roots include:

- * roots forming above the main root structure
- * girdling roots that encircle and compress the trunk

Step 3:

The tree is mulched correctly using the method outlined above.

