



APPLEWOOD ACRES
GARDENING & LANDSCAPING
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APPLEWOOD ACRES GARDENING & LANDSCAPING RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE USE OF MULCH MATERIALS

What Type Of Mulch Should I Use?

Applewood recommends golden cedar mulch, which has **not** been infused with any artificial colour or chemical dye agents. (Some dye agents have been known to contain traces of mercury and/or other carcinogenic toxins).

- Applewood recommends the use of fresh organic mulch (wood chips and bark) where you want to control weeds and improve appearance. It can also be used to improve soil conditions as the bark decomposes over time providing needed nutrients to trees and shrubs. While organic, it hasn't begun to decompose and will last longer than aged mulch.



- An aged organic mulch (partially decomposed wood products) can also be used to improve the soil and encourage all-around plant growth. It will continue to decompose and add nutrients to the soil. It's often sold in bulk and is more expensive.

Which Mulch Keeps Its Color the Longest?

Most natural organic mulches (except golden cedar mulch) will turn gray in about a year, depending on the amount of sunlight that hits them. However, if you want more color to accent the colors of your plants and flowers, buy custom-colored organic mulches (photos below) that have been processed with vegetable dyes and NOT carcinogenic chemicals .

Expect the color to last for two to three years. Bright colors like red might run a bit during a hard rain, but the color should wash off nearby walks. Colored mulches also tend to have finer textures, a characteristic that helps them mat together and stay in place on slopes. Ask for colored mulch at your local nursery.

Organic mulch colored with vegetable dyes adds contrast and interest to gardens. It'll need replenishing every two to three years.

Will Mulch Work Everywhere?

No. Organic mulches spread over damp, low areas may retain too much moisture for plants. Sometimes they'll encourage an overpopulation of slugs and other pests that'll eat or harm certain plants. And rock mulches can get extremely hot and bake shallow plant roots.

Applewood recommends that all plants have the proper soil conditions, supplemented by natural and or organic compost fertilizer before any mulch is added. When in doubt contact Applewood for some expert advise or to discuss your specific yard conditions.

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Which Organic Mulch Will Last The Longest?

In general we advise clients to pick a type with larger chunks, because it'll decompose more slowly. And choose bark-type mulches (such as pine bark nuggets) before shredded wood types (such as cypress and hardwood). Keep in mind that mulch reduces maintenance but doesn't eliminate it. Organic mulches have to be replenished and if plants are not maintained properly, some mulches may in fact assist pests to harbor in the moisture of a mulch pile beneath plants. Regular turning and aeration of mulch is recommended.



Will Mulch Stop Weeds?

Mulch won't stop weeds completely. Applied deep enough, it will prevent many weed seeds already in the soil from germinating and growing. But it won't stop weeds that have already rooted. Tough weeds like dandelions will push right through if you don't dig them out first. And more weed seeds will blow in and take root in the mulch (in both organic and stone). All mulch-covered gardens require maintenance, though less than if you don't use mulch.

Pull all weeds before mulching and add at least a 4-in. layer to keep weed seeds from germinating.

Examples of Poor Mulching

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Proper Mulching & How Thick Should I Apply Organic Mulch?



Photo above shows a young maple (staked for support) with proper edging, and compost fertilizer added for mulch and free of crawling weeds or grass.

A layer of mulch 3 to 4 in. deep will keep most weed seeds in the soil from sprouting and increase moisture retention. However, more isn't always better. Limit the depth to 5 to 6 in., especially around shallow-rooted plants. And we recommend that all mulch be pulled away from the base of plants and trees so it doesn't cause rot.

Note:

Cocoa bean mulch is popular in some areas because of its deep brown color and chocolate odor. But it's a bit tricky to use effectively and more expensive. Apply it no more than 1 in. thick, because thicker layers tend to retain too much water and become moldy. You may also have to replenish it more often because it blows away easily when dry. Also be aware that dogs can get sick if they eat or chew on this mulch.



Spread about 4 in. of mulch to slow weed growth and retain moisture. However, clear a 6-in. area around woody stems to prevent rot.

For more information on the use of mulch materials and/or any other information on organic or natural gardening and lawn care techniques or services, please contact **Applewood Acres Gardening & Landscaping (Practicing responsible horticulture and 100% organic gardening for over 20 years).**

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