



APPLEWOOD ACRES  
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## APPLEWOOD ACRES GARDENING & LANDSCAPING

# AVOIDING MULCHING MISTAKES

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### **Mulching annual flower beds**

Larger pieces of wood mulch near the head of the flower will 'dampen' off the bloom due to increased humidity. If mulch is used to reduce weeds, use small wood fines (CEDAR MULCH IS BEST) and spread at about one-half inch.

### **Placing weed barrier beneath the mulch**

Plastic and fabric weed barriers negate the organic benefits of wood mulch that encourages a native environment. Wood particles provide aeration and reduce soil compaction, while returning carbon into the planting bed. DO NOT COMBINE THE TWO (WEED BARRIERS + MULCH)

### **Too much mulch**

Excessive mulching and heaping mounds can pull feeder roots to the surface, which stresses the plant during periods of extreme weather conditions. Spread mulch more evenly to the standard recommended depth of no more than 3".

### **Wood chips are not mulch**

Limbs and branches from tree trimmings decay at an accelerated rate. Standard mulch provides a significantly higher level of fibrous matter that retains moisture.

### **Using "free" mulch**

Unless you know exactly where the mulch is from, avoid free mulch that may harbour harmful insects such as gypsy moths, or parasitic insects as those found in the mulch that was distributed following the Katrina hurricane and from thousands of infected trees in the Louisiana region several years ago. Professionally manufactured mulch is processed to eliminate the ability for weed seed to germinate.

### **Laying green mulch**

Green horticultural waste used as mulch competes with your landscape plants for beneficial soil-borne nitrogen. Green mulch that has not been sufficiently aged, properly screened and processed, generates excessive microbial activity similar to the processes being produced by the landscape plant itself.

### **Worth Repeating--- Know where your mulch comes from**

**Construction and demolition material can contain harmful** contaminants such as nails, plastics and metal, and even CCA, arsenic used on treated lumber. Ask your supplier for certified mulch products...and demand safe and reliable mulch products.

### **Utilizing decorative rock and stone as mulch**

Rock and stone radiate heat within the plant bed generating stress and return no horticultural value for plants. Mulch holds moisture and minimizes temperature fluctuations.

### **Mulching at the base of a tree**

Avoid mulch "volcanoes" - created by heaping mulch up around the base of the tree. Mulch must be tapered away from the trunk of trees before applying mulch at the recommended depth of 3". Deep application

of mulch surrounding tree trunks encourages rotting of the cambium or bark of the tree.

**Not mulching at all!**

The benefits of mulching far exceed the decision not to mulch. Beneficial gains in support of a costly landscape include water retention, cooling of summer soil temperatures and weed suppression. The decomposition of wood mulch reduces soil compaction that opens areas for roots to expand through the soil seeking out nutrients. Decomposition returns micronutrients and minerals into your planting bed, including carbon, an essential element for plant growth.