

Summertime and Mulch Makes Things Easy

Are weeds invading your azaleas? Has your Bermuda grass taken over your tomato patch? Does your garden have areas that lose soil every time we get a big rain? Does your flowerbed dry out really fast? Looking for an environmentally friendly (and easy) way to add organic matter and nutrients to your soil? If your answer to any or all of these questions is yes, it's time to mulch!

A 2-4" layer of light-colored organic mulch works well to help reduce soil temperatures . . . which can top 100 degrees in July and August. Organic mulch is preferred as inorganic mulch (e.g. rubber, recycled glass, rock, etc.) may actually hold the heat in. Mulch will also conserve moisture and suppress the growth of weeds and grass. Newly planted ornamental trees need a circular area of mulch that extends at least 3 feet from the trunk. This makes mowing easier and helps prevent mechanical damage to young bark. Add more as needed to maintain the 2-inch depth and keep the mulch at least 2-4" from the trunk. Too much mulch placed too close to the trunk can create an environment favorable to disease and insects. Think donut, not volcano!

The nice thing about organic mulches is that they break down over time, thus adding nutrients to your soil. At the end of the growing season, compost any remaining mulch for next year's garden. Bark chips, peat moss, composted manure and cottonseed hulls are all good choices and are available at your local garden center. Other options include compost, chopped cornstalks, leaves, newsprint, peanut shells, pine needles, straw, sawdust, wood shavings and ground corncobs. Lawn clippings are a good choice *if* they are free of pesticide residue, weed seeds, diseased material, and other pests. Note that Tulsa County offers UNLIMITED FREE wood chips at 2100 North 145th E Avenue 7 days a week.

Mulching is a great, easy (and sometimes free!) way to solve many common gardening problems and it looks great, too.

Sources:

[OSU Extension Fact Sheet HLA-6005](#)

[Master Gardener's Manual E-1034](#)

OSU Extension Agent's Handbook E-832



