

TOWN OF SMITHTOWN

Department of Environment & Waterways, Forestry

Tips for proper mulching



Providing mulch to landscaped trees is a simple, but significant way to support a tree!

However, done incorrectly could do more harm than good.

AVOID OVERMULCHING

- Over-mulching is a common occurrence. Commonly known as the ‘volcano’ method, over mulching can have severe consequences to a tree’s development
 - **Oxygen and root suffocation.** Over-mulching impedes a tree’s ability to breath.
 - **Pest and disease.** Over-mulching creates produces a perpetually moist area are the lower trunk of the tree. This condition is an open invite to fungal and insect activity.
 - **Girdling roots.** Over-mulching inhibits natural root development. Poor mulch application will cause roots to girdle making the tree more prone to failure during weather events.



THERE IS A RIGHT WAY!

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Source: Penn State Extension: Mulching Landscaped Trees

PROPER MULCH APPLICATION

- Organic mulch or aged wood chips are great choices for tree pits.
 - Organic mulch is free to residents at our municipal services facility!
 - 85 Old Northport Road, Kings Park, 11754
 - 631-269-6600
- While mulch can be applied any time of year its recommended to apply mulch at two specific times in the year.
 - Mid-spring as temperatures begin to rise.
 - Mid-fall as temperatures lower but before freezing.
- Provide 2-4 inches within the tree's dripline (extent of the canopy or tree branches).
- **Do not make contact with the tree trunk. Proper mulching should resemble a 'donut' appearance.**

Other Tips

- Past seasons mulch can be recycled by breaking up the material by hand or rake.
- Check the depth! Adding new mulch over old mulch is the same as over-mulching.
- Go for distance not height! Wider spread mulch is essential for proper root development.
- Proper mulching can help avoid surface roots in the future!
- Give us a call and one of the town's arborists can provide advice for proper street tree mulching

For advice on street tree care
or to report a tree in need of service
Contact the Dept. of Environment & Waterways

631-360-7514

[E-mail D.E.W](#)



Always go with the 'donut' method!

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