

National Arborist Association

Fax: 1-603-672-2613

Contact: Robert Rouse Rouse@natlarb.com

3 Perimeter Rd. – Unit 1

Manchester, NH 03103

1-800-733-2622



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Installing Mulch Rings Improves Tree Health

Homeowners and professional arborists depend on mulch in landscapes for several reasons. Functionally, mulches discourage weeds from growing, conserve moisture during drought periods, and allow better use of water by controlling runoff and increasing water-holding capacity of light, sandy soils.

Mulches help maintain a uniform soil temperature. A 2 to 4-inch layer of mulch can add to the aesthetic value of a garden while protecting the base of trees from being injured by mechanical equipment.

Mulch rings also decrease competition from lawn grass. Lawn grass, especially when well-maintained, robs trees of valuable nutrients and moisture.

Many organic materials can be used as a mulch. Bark mulches and wood chips are the two most commonly used mulches in most of the country. In the south, pine needles are included in that list.

Mulch can be applied just about any time of the year when trees and shrubs are being planted. The best time, however, to apply mulch in established bed areas would be in mid-spring when soil temperature has warmed up enough for sufficient root growth. If applied earlier, the mulch could keep the soil temperature lower and root growth could be delayed.

Mulches should be applied 2 to 4 inches in depth over relatively clean, weed-free soils. Do not pile mulch more than 4 inches. Identify and eradicate the weeds before the mulch is applied. Do not allow mulch to physically touch tree trunks. Keep mulch back about 6-12 inches from the tree trunks.

Most arborists consider organic mulches as the most compatible with trees. There are, however, several inorganic materials used as mulches. These include weed barriers.

Black plastic is sometimes used to discourage weeds, however it interferes with the normal oxygen and water supply to the tree's roots. When plastic is used a very shallow root system is created and during drought periods, the plants are less capable of obtaining water and may not withstand the stress. Therefore, **it is recommended not to use black plastic around trees**. There are, however, several landscape fabric mulch products available that will function the same as plastic, but allow for normal water and oxygen exchange. These materials are placed on bare soil around trees and shrubs with the mulches used on top. There are many brands and types of materials from which to choose. They have proven to be beneficial in discouraging weeds and holding soil moisture.

For a list of professional arborists in your area, or to get information on the care and maintenance of trees, contact the National Arborist Association, 1-800-733-2622 or conduct your own zip code search on the NAA's web site, <http://www.NATLARB.com>. The NAA is a 60-year-old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture. Its more than 2,000 members all recognize stringent safety and performance standards, and are required to carry liability insurance.