

Press Release.

Proper Mulching of Landscape Trees

Of all the practices that can improve the long-term health and vigour of your trees, proper mulching is the most important and significant.

Landscape trees usually live in a competitive, hostile environment, compared to the forest floor of native trees. Turf competes for water and nutrients. Lawn mowers and trimmers damage roots and trunk. Even foot traffic compacts soils, reducing important air space.

A 75mm (3") layer of organic mulch (such as wood chips) over as much of the roots as possible creates a micro-ecosystem for tree roots, greatly improving growing conditions. Moisture retention, soil temperature moderation and organic improvement of soils are important benefits.

How far from the trunk should you mulch?

Ideally you should mulch to the 'dripline' or outer branch spread of your tree. This is pretty easy with smaller trees and low-branched evergreens, but difficult with large amenity trees.

We suggest:

- Kill grass around all trees at least one foot from trunk to protect from lawn mower and string trimmer injury. This is the leading cause of decline and death of average landscape trees. Kill grass beyond lowest evergreen branch tips to reduce disease infection of tips.
- On large trees, mulching even a 6 - 8' radius can provide increased drought and stress resistance.
- Sometimes ornamental beds can be created to both mulch the trees and provide an interesting design element.

How much and what kind of mulch should you use?

Shredded hardwood bark, pine bark, cypress, and wood chips all have their advantages and are your best choices. Rock mulches are better than turf, but do not create as plant-friendly environment as organic mulches.

We suggest no more than a 75-100mm (3 - 4") layer of mulch, with none at all placed against the base of the tree. Tree bark must breathe, and excessive mulch can be detrimental to both bark and roots.

How do you kill the grass?

In most cases we suggest killing turf with a Glyphosate based herbicide such as "Round-Up", then mulching over the grass. Do not dig out the grass - tree roots are very shallow and damaged by such excavation. Each year, spray the edge of the mulched bed with Round-up to prevent grass encroachment and define the bed-line.

If you wish to avoid chemical use, lay newspapers over the grass first, then mulch. This simple management strategy is your best insurance for increased tree longevity.