



## MULCH

Mulches alter the structure of the soil that usually increases root growth. The addition of such mulches as leaves, sphagnum peat moss, or shredded bark to the soil brings an almost immediate effect. Aeration is improved in clay soils, and the water-holding capacity is increased in sandy soils. If not already decomposed, the mulch will promote granulation, or the clinging together of soil particles. During decomposition of organic material, soil micro-organisms secrete a sticky substance that plays an important role in soil granulation. This process is particularly important in heavy soil types.

Cultivating the soil when it is too wet destroys good structure. When mulches are used, cultivation is reduced or eliminated. Soil structure is also harmed by walking through the garden when the soil is wet. Mulches, however, serve as a cushion and thus minimize the damage. In addition, soil structure is not disturbed by pelting rains.

### Why mulch?

Spreading mulch on your gardens, flower beds and around your trees and shrubs not only adds beauty to your landscaping, but the mulch also discourages weed growth by blocking sunlight while reducing your need to water by retaining moisture.

Mulches conserve moisture by reducing the amount of soil water lost through evaporation and help maintain a uniform soil temperature. They act as insulators, keeping the soil warmer during cool weather and cooler during the warm months of the year.

Mulches minimize soil erosion and compaction from heavy rains and aid in water penetration. Mulches help with weed problems. If the mulch material is weed-free to begin with, and if it is applied correctly, weed seeds in the soil won't germinate. Or if the mulch layer is deep, seedlings that do germinate can't push up through it. Perennial broadleaf weeds and grasses however will grow through most mulches (except through inorganic mulches such as polyethylene or aluminum foil).

### Benefits of mulch

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| Less water: | Mulch can save up to 73% of water loss through evaporation. Eventually the mulch breaks down to create humus that improves soil structure, aids moisture retention, and improves air and water movement through the soil. |
| Less waste: | Through composting and mulching we can save our dwindling landfill areas.   |
| Weed free:  | Weed seeds can accumulate in topsoil and can potentially germinate for two to five years. By creating a "blanket" of organic material you restrict unwanted seeds light. Without light and heat these unwanted seeds      |

remain dormant, and if they do germinate they cannot break through the "blanket" quickly enough for photosynthesis to feed the unwanted growing plant.

Organic food:

Mulch gardening provides essential non-toxic nutrients to the soil (such as nitrogen which improves the foliage of your plants). You can maximize your garden into a totally organic food factory through the creation of a strong garden ecosystem utilizing biodiversity and the promotion of healthy insects. Why continue to poison ourselves with vegetables grown in noxious toxins?

### **What can be used as mulch?**

- Grass clippings
- Leafmolds
- Leaves
- Sphagnum and Hypnum peat
- Pine Boughs or Needles
- Sawdust
- Bark--Shredded, Chunked or Chipped
- Straw
- Wood Chips And Shavings