

MULCH VOLCANOES CAN KILL TREES

Improper mulching techniques are a common downfall and are among the leading causes of mortality in freshly planted trees. Mulch should never be piled up against the tree trunk. Mulching in a “volcano” shape can make the tree more susceptible to fungus, insects, and rodents. The volcano of mulch also prevents water from reaching the tree’s roots. Among the worst materials for mulching are fresh grass clippings, organic matter, peat moss or sawdust, ground rubber tires and stones or pebbles.

Mulching in the shape of a donut is the best form to prevent disease and damage to the tree. The best materials for proper mulching are chunks of bark, pine needles, wood chips aged for one year, or leaves that have been shredded and decomposed for a minimum of three months. Mulch should be spread six inches from the trunk at ground level and outward to the ends of the outreaching branches. Keep the mulch to a maximum depth of four inches, never allowing it to gather around the trunk itself.

Proper mulching techniques nourish the tree by as-



sisting the soil to hold water for the roots while reducing weeds and grass around the tree that would compete for resources such as water and nutrients. Mulching also prevents soil erosion, which is highly damaging to the tree’s roots and increases the chance for the tree to become uprooted in a storm. Mulch helps to moderate soil temperature, which is much less stressful for the tree’s roots. Acting like an insulating blanket, mulch helps to cool the soil in the summer and warm it in the winter. The right mulch can act like a slow-release fertilizer for the tree.

If trees on your property are surrounded by mulch volcanoes, do not remove the entire volcano at once, which may further stress the tree as its roots may have grown up into the mulch volcano. The New Jersey Community Forestry Program suggests contacting a registered NJ Certified Tree Expert for suggestions on treating the tree. For more information contact the Community Forestry Program at (609) 292-2532 or visit www.communityforestry.nj.gov.

10 REASONS TO PLANT TREES IN NEW JERSEY

1. Trees store carbon and clean the atmosphere. In 50 years, one tree generates \$30,000 in oxygen, recycles \$35,000 of water and removes \$60,000 of air pollution.
2. Trees prevent or reduce soil erosion
3. Trees make life more pleasant by softening harsh outlines of buildings and reducing noise pollution.
4. Trees screen unsightly views and provide privacy in our neighborhoods.
5. Research shows that trees help reduce stress in the workplace and speed hospital patients’ recovery.
6. Living windbreaks reduce cooling and heating costs, reduce wind, provide wildlife habitat and simply look nice.
7. Living snowfences, strategically placed trees hold snow away from roads, reducing maintenance costs.
8. Trees, planted as memorials, leave a valuable gift for future generations.
9. Trees add brilliant colors to fall landscapes and following the dropping of the leaves, provide excellent mulch for the Garden State
10. It has been proven that trees measurably increase neighborhood cohesion and thus reduce crime rates.