



Mulch - it does the garden good!

As I drive around the city of Memphis, I see the commercial landscapers putting down fresh mulch around trees and in flowerbeds. The sight of the landscapers reminds me that I need to mulch my flowerbeds as well. Yes, it is about that time of year!

Mulch is beneficial for your garden and landscape. It helps to keep everything healthy. Mulching occurs regularly, and naturally, with fallen leaves, twigs, spent flowers and other materials providing a protective covering for the soil.

Here are some benefits of mulching:

- Helps the soil hold moisture by reducing evaporation.
- Controls weeds in the garden. Be sure that the mulch you are using is weed-free.
- Regulates soil temperature. Mulch keeps the soil cooler on hot days and warmer on cold days.
- Prevents soil crusting, thus improving water adsorption and percolation. This also helps to reduce soil erosion.
- Improves the soil structure through decomposition and adds organic matter to the soil.
- Protects the trunks of trees and shrubs from lawn equipment.
- Beautifies your garden and landscape.

Over-mulching can be harmful and create additional problems. When mulching please do not pile mulch directly against the trunk of the trees and shrubs. This is called “volcano mulching”. Pull the mulch back from the trunk about two to three inches. This will prevent decay caused by wet mulch and rodent/insect damage.

Be sure to weed the area before applying mulch. This would also be a good time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to the site. Keeping mulch uniform in depth and well maintained will help prevent weed problems.

The best mulch is shredded hardwood or pine bark. Compost is also a good mulch to use in your landscape. These mulches will break down and be consumed into the soil enriching its organic matter content and nutrient value.

Choose the mulch that suits your needs. No matter which one you use, do not apply more than a three inch layer. This should be enough to suppress weeds and retain moisture in your landscape.

Now if only I could just get some help getting my flowerbeds mulched! Happy gardening!



Christopher Cooper