



LANDSCAPE · NURSERY · GARDEN CENTER

Media Contact:

Cynthia Greenwood
GreenMark Public Relations
847-404-8404
cgreenwood@greenmarkpr.com

For Immediate Release

Mulch Ado: Tony Fulmer's 10 Good Reasons to Mulch

From the Garden Expert at Chalet

WILMETTE, Ill. (April 25, 2008) – The word “mulch” may sound intimidating to those starting their first garden, but it needn’t be. Mulch is simply any material laid over the soil surface of a garden or landscape. It is different from an amendment, which is anything that is dug into the soil to enhance plant growth.

Gardeners can become fanatics about their favorite mulches and for good reason. Tony Fulmer, retail manager for Chalet, shares key benefits that make gardeners “mad for mulch.”

1. **Summer water bills drop.** A 1- to 2-inch layer of mulch over garden beds or the root systems of trees and shrubs will dramatically reduce the rate of surface evaporation and the need to apply supplemental water. (Hint: The sandier the soil, the deeper the mulch level should be. Use less mulch with poorly drained clay soils).
2. **Mulch makes planting easier.** Foot traffic, hard rain and forceful watering from the hose can compact soil, making it difficult to plant and less favorable for growth. Using organic mulch for several years will loosen up clay soils.
3. **Plants like cool summer temps.** Un-mulched soils heat up, discouraging root growth near the surface. Mulch acts as insulator, buffering wild swings in temperature. (Hint: This is especially true in sites near buildings, patios, sidewalks and driveways, where reflected heat can really drive up soil temperatures.)
4. **Gardeners gain more leisure time.** You won’t be weeding as much (if at all) or cultivating mulched areas. Weeds generally prefer warm, bare soil.

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5. **Drainage is improved.** As organic mulch breaks down over time, it causes clay soils to “loosen up,” providing air spaces that improve drainage and plant growth. Surprisingly, mulch also has a binding effect on sandy soils, causing them to hold more water. Another bonus: nutrients are released to plants as organic mulch decomposes.
6. Some mulch has fungal inhibiting properties. Shredded pine or small pieces of pine bark have actually been proven to inhibit fungal growth, making them an especially fine choice for rhododendrons and azaleas.
7. **Mulched beds are pleasing to the eye.** Mulch acts as a unifying element in beds and borders. A continuous carpet of mulch ties plants together.
8. **Mulch keeps unknowing gardeners from cultivating deeply with hoes.** Even worse, gardeners may be tempted to get out their shovels and till up un-mulched soil adjacent to trees and shrubs. This disturbs the roots, which is very harmful to plants.
9. **Soil is insulated.** Mulched soils are slower to freeze in the fall, which means plants have longer to get established. Roots will continue to grow as long as soil temperatures are above 40 degrees. Plants in mulched soils are less apt to be damaged in winters that have repeated freeze/thaw, warm/cold cycles.
10. **Plants simply grow better.** University research has consistently shown that all types of plants (trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials, vegetables) perform dramatically better when they are mulched.

Chalet has been named the most innovative garden center in America for 2007 by Garden Center magazine. The garden center is located at 3132 Lake St. in Wilmette, Ill., just off the Edens Expressway. Chalet’s landscape division is housed on a 28,000-square-foot complex on 16 acres in North Chicago, Ill. Chalet also operates a 183-acre growing nursery in Salem, Wis. For information, call 847-256-0561 or visit www.ChaletNursery.com.

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Editors, please note: Images are available upon request to help illustrate stories.