

## A Definition of Mulch

Mulch is a material spread on the surface of the soil to:

- protect the soil and roots from the effects of raindrops, evaporation, freezing, and soil crusting.
- alert mowers and string trimmer operators to keep from damaging tree trunks.

## Good Mulch Materials:

- won't blow away in wind and/or wet conditions.
- are free of harmful weeds, diseases, and toxic chemicals.
- allow water and air to enter the soil.

## Proper Mulching Techniques:

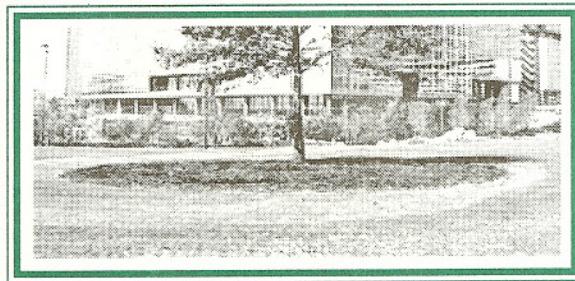
- Use a two to four inch layer; deeper amounts could harm the tree.
- Leave a four inch space between the mulch and the trunk of the tree.
- Spread a band of mulch one foot wide for each inch of trunk diameter.



*Avoid mounding mulch around a tree. Two to four inches is effective; deeper layers can damage the tree.*

## Allow No Cones or Mounds!

- **Mulch "cones" or mounds kill trees.**
- Mulch piled in cones against a tree trunk encourages harmful, moisture-loving insects and diseases.
- Deep mulch mounds encourage roots to grow upward into the mulch!



*The photo above illustrates proper mulching techniques.*

## Rodents Love Deep Mulch!

- Mulch cones provide deep, cozy winter homes for rodents.
- Mice and voles over-winter in deep mulch.
- Keep mulch at least four inches away from tree trunks.
- Rodents will gnaw on tree bark, especially when deep mulch against the trunk protects them.

## Bark and Wood Chips

- are attractive and effective.
- can draw nitrogen from the soil.
- should be composted for about a year to minimize drawing nitrogen from the soil.



*These fresh wood chips should be composted about a year before being used as mulch.*

## Mulch: Friend or Foe?

When used properly, mulch can be a wonderful tool that can help you raise strong, healthy trees. Misusing mulch, however, can have harmful or even fatal consequences for your trees.

This brochure is designed to provide you with a few helpful hints on how to properly use mulch on your trees. For more information on how to care for your trees, contact the Delaware Forest Service.

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# TREE TIPS

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**Delaware Community  
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## MULCHING TREES

