

How to Apply Mulch



WHAT IS IT?

Mulch is a layer of organic material that is spread on the top of soil. Mulch materials include most natural vegetation, such as dried grass or leaves, or crop residue, such as maize stalks. Mulch materials should be free of disease and/or weed seeds.

WHY DO WE DO IT?

Covering soil helps keep moisture in the soil, regulates soil temperatures, and prevents weeds from growing. Covered soil is also less likely to erode during heavy rainstorms.

TERMS USED

Dry mulch: Dried organic material, such as leaves or grasses, that can be used to cover bare soil. Mulch can regulate soil temperatures, protect soil from erosion, suppress weed growth, and add organic material to the soil.

Green mulch: Cover crops, such as desmodium or mucuna, that are planted to enrich the soil. Cover crops protect bare soil and are incorporated into the soil when green to build soil organic matter.



HOW TO Apply Mulch

STEP 1

Gather dry or green mulch material. If green mulch is used, it should not be placed too close to the stems or leaves of growing plants as it can cause them to rot or create fungal problems. Place green mulch 0.5 meters away from tender stems and leaves.

STEP 2

Place a 3–5 cm deep layer of mulch material over all exposed soils in the growing beds, pathways, tree

basins, and swales. All bare ground should receive some form of mulch. When possible, mulch should be thicker (5–10 cm) to help suppress weeds and retain moisture.

STEP 3

Any mulch material not placed around the plants can be left on the soil surface to protect the soil and minimize evaporation.



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