

COMMON PROBLEMS

PLANT A TREE! IT'S A GREAT FAMILY ACTIVITY

MULCH VOLCANOES

Mulch is good for your trees and shrubs, but you can carry a good thing too far. A common problem is creating a **MULCH VOLCANO**, or piling too much mulch near the trunk. Unfortunately, many people think mulch volcanoes look pretty, but too much mulch near the trunk can damage your tree.



Mulch volcano — WRONG!

Deep mulch against the trunk can suffocate

the roots, compact the soil, and block the penetration of water and fertilizers into the soil. In addition, it can cause cankers (open wounds) on the lower trunk. Once



Donut around trunk — RIGHT!

your tree develops cankers, the situation cannot be reversed, and your tree will die within a few seasons.

Resist the temptation to make a "mulch volcano." Leave that donut around the tree trunk.

FRESH MULCH

Bulk mulch often is free for the taking right after a storm, when cities and counties chip the wood debris. But mulch is like wine: Fresh is not necessarily better.

Freshly chipped mulch uses up nitrogen as it decomposes, robbing the plants of this nutrient. Fresh mulch also can make the soil more acidic, causing damage to your trees and plants. And research has shown that the heat generated by fresh mulch as it decomposes can damage plants.

BE SURE TO USE MULCH THAT HAS COMPOSTED FOR AT LEAST 2-4 WEEKS.



For additional information on mulch use and a list of Iowa mulch suppliers, visit

www.mulchiowa.com

For a printed copy of Iowa's mulch dealers call (515) 281-8672

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MULCH IOWA

**A GUIDE
TO THE
BENEFITS
OF
MULCH
AND WHY YOU
SHOULD USE
MULCH
PRODUCED IN
IOWA**



Iowa Department of Natural Resources

A PLAN FOR YOUR MULCH PROJECT

WHY USE MULCH?



Mulch helps to recreate the organic layer and soil structure of a wooded environment, which benefits your trees and shrubs...

- Helps maintain even soil temperature in the roots by keeping them cool in the summer and warm in the winter.
- Promotes plant growth.
- Controls weeds.
- Conserves soil moisture, meaning you use less water.
- Improves soil structure and quality over the root area.
- Protects from mechanical damage (mowers, string trimmers, etc.)
- Helps beautify the new planting.

HOW TO MULCH— 4 EASY STEPS

Step 1: Place a layer of your chosen mulch material in a minimum depth of 3-4 inches around the base of the tree.

Step 2: Pull mulch away from the tree trunk, creating a “donut”



shape. Excessive mulch piled on the trunk can attract rodents and retain excess water, promoting the spread of disease.

Step 3: Mulch should extend to at least the drip line. Wider is definitely better.

Step 4: Don't forget to check the mulch thickness periodically. Keep extra mulch on hand, and add mulch as necessary to maintain a minimum depth of 3-4 inches.

HOW MUCH MULCH?



You need enough mulch to cover the ground to a minimum of 3-4 inches deep out to the tree's drip line (see drawing). Here's how to figure the amount needed for a circle....

DRIP LINE

1. Measure from the tree trunk to the drip line. For example, let's say 3 feet.
2. Square that number ($3 \times 3 = 9$).
3. Multiply by 3 ($9 \times 3 = 27$).
4. Multiply by a depth of 4 inches, or 0.33 feet (one-third foot) ($27 \times 0.33 = 9$). For a 3-foot distance to the drip line, you'd need about 9 cubic feet.
4. For a square or rectangle, multiply length times width times depth.

WHY USE MULCH PRODUCED IN IOWA?

Iowa produces tons of quality wood mulch annually. When you buy Iowa mulch, you help the state in many important ways.



- Mulch provides organic benefit to trees and shrubs.
- Using Iowa mulch helps reduce the 225,600 tons of wood that end up in our landfills each year.
- Using Iowa mulch promotes the sustainable growth of Iowa businesses.

CHOOSING MULCH

There are many types of mulch, but organic mulch can be classified generally into two categories...

WORKING MULCH ■ DECORATIVE MULCH



All Iowa organic mulches are working mulches, but some add a touch of beauty. Often decorative mulches are colored or contain bark, and some are composed of exotic materials, such as cocoa shells. But decorative mulches have drawbacks. They're expensive, and many of them aren't

produced in Iowa. If beautification isn't a high priority, try a less expensive mulch. Another option is to use a shallow decorative layer over a less expensive layer of working mulch. This will provide that aesthetic appeal while reducing cost. Either way, be sure to ask your dealer for Iowa mulch.