

Mulching 101

What is mulch?

Mulch is shredded wood or bark. Be cautious: mulch should not be from ash trees, since ash borer larvae or cocoons may be present, unless the mulch is ground into pellets.



Why do we mulch?

Mulch helps the soil retain moisture, keeps the soil cool, suppresses weeds, and adds to soil nutrients when it decomposes. We recommend mulching twice a year in Spring and Fall. The added mulch in Spring will help retain moisture during the hot summer months and in the Fall, mulching will help, with the snow, to provide insulation for the roots. Removing weeds and grass from around the tree is important because their short roots absorb the rain first winning the competition for water and nutrients.

How do we mulch?

After the tree is planted, spread a layer of newspaper (4 pages thick) around the base of the tree (root collar) as a first step to help suppress weeds and retain moisture. The newspaper will eventually decompose.

Add 2 buckets of mulch around the base of the tree and spread ankle deep.
Make a big flat donut around the tree, **not a volcano!**

It is important that the mulch does not touch the trunk of the tree, because mulch will rot the bark over time. Gater water bags can have the same long-term effect.



IN THIS PHOTO:

The person in grey is pointing students where to measure the base of young tree (root collar) using a caliper.

NOTE: They have left a big space in the mulch around the root collar. The space looks like a hole and reaches to the soil.

NOTE: The depth and area of the mulch spread for this young tree. They have to finish mulching to make donut wider.

Can you find the ACER coded tree tag? Why is it important?

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