

Ask An Arborist™

Quick Reference: Mulch

The Benefits of Brown: A good thing...but not too much!

You really can't go wrong with mulch -- although there are a few details to keep in mind. Mulch is used to mimic the humus layer that occurs naturally in forests. Therefore, we recommend a 2" - 4" layer of organic mulch (our favorite is a composted mix of wood chips, needles, and leaves) that extends to the tree's dripline. We know that mulching to your tree's dripline isn't always practical...but it's a goal. Proper mulching helps to conserve moisture, reduce weed competition, improve soil structure, and protect a tree from lawn mowers and weed-whackers.

Mulch is great, but some practices can cause problems. Piling mulch against a tree's trunk may lead to serious issues such as root rot, girdling roots, or insect infestations. Also, avoid using inorganic materials, such as stone. They do not provide nearly as many benefits as organic mulch.

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North Shore: 847.729.1963 • Northwest: 847.726.1991 • West: 630.725.1963 • Chicago: 773.725.1863

