

Mulching

Nature has forever been mulching the earth with dead grass and leaves, fallen limbs and trees, and even dead animals and insects. As this expired life lay on the surface of the soil, it kept the soil moist and at a favorable temperature.

Mulching is therefore, the most natural and beneficial practice that gardeners can provide.

Soil under mulch is warmer than soil in full sun during the winter. In the spring, March or April, the soil under the mulch and the soil in full sun equalize. At this time, the soil under mulch becomes cooler than the temperatures under mulch and in full sun equalize again. The soil under mulch then remains warmer than the soil in full sun throughout the winter.

The greatest effect of a mulch cover is the insulation of the soil. Adequate mulch allows plant roots to continue to function throughout the summer and winter. In addition, soil moisture remains at a more constant level.

Information provided by Malcolm Beck, The Garden-Ville Method.

Types of Mulch

Cedar shavings and chips (the best)
Dried leaves
Grass clippings (not more than 4 inches thick or it'll mat)
Straw
Pine bark chips
Shredded hardwoods
Black plastic sheeting
Newspaper (no colored inks)
Cardboard
Old carpet strips between your garden rows
Pine needles (great for acid-loving plants like azaleas and blueberries)
Compost

The best time to mulch is after a heavy rain before the weather gets too hot. Do not apply mulch when the ground is dry. If you do, the mulch will absorb any future rain-water and allow it to evaporate before it can soak into the soil. Mulch newly planted trees and shrubs to keep the soil around the roots moist.

