

WaterWise Mulching Tips

It's amazing what natural rainfall can accomplish in our landscapes, but when the dog-days of summer hit, and you start to see your water bill creep up from irrigation, you'll want another solution to make the moisture stay around and the green last longer so more green stays in your wallet. Mulching is a great solution that does just that.

Adding mulch is easy to do and has several benefits for your landscape:

- Improves the appearance of your landscape
- Insulates your plants from weather extremes
- Reduces watering needs
- Holds soil in place
- Blocks out weeds
- Protects roots
- Adds nutrients to the soil

Types of Mulch

There are many different types of mulch available at local garden supply and home improvement stores, however, all mulch falls into one of two categories: organic and inorganic.

Organic mulch, such as cedar or pine bark, should be used around trees and plants. Organic mulch breaks down slowly, adding nutrients to the soil. The finer the particles, the faster they enrich the soil.

Inorganic mulch, such as rock and expanded shale, is great for along paths or borders. This type of mulch tends to get hot under sunlight and can then burn plants.

Different colors and textures are available allowing for personalization of your landscape look.

To help with weed control, place landscape fabric on the ground and place mulch on top. This has the added benefit of allowing water to filter down to the soil (and your plants roots) while keeping the mulch from settling into the soil.

Where to Use Mulch

Mulch should be added to your flower beds whenever you can see bare ground between plants. You may also want to add a layer of mulch if your drip irrigation lines are visible on the surface of the bed.

Mulching around trees holds water near the tree and protects trunks and surface roots from being damaged by lawn maintenance equipment. However, mulch should never actually touch the tree bark and this can cause the bark to decay, creating a condition known as "girdling" which will eventually kill the tree.

Mulch can be used in areas where grass is difficult to establish, such as shady spots under trees. This will create a beautiful look without the waste of laying sod where it just won't grow.

A two (2) inch layer of mulch is sufficient for most areas, and more can be added at any time.