



MULCH IS MAGIC: FACTSHEET

Mulch offers trees, shrubs, plants, and gardens many benefits:

- keeping roots cool
- keeping weeds down
- to helping retain moisture
- reducing erosion and soil compaction
- protects tree trunks from damage by lawnmowers and string trimmers

Mulch will break down over time, adding organic matter to the soil.

What type of mulch is best?

High quality “tub-ground” mulch recommended for school grounds.

How much mulch?

Use the chart below to determine the total amount of mulch needed.

MULCH NEEDS	VOLUME OF MULCH	NOTES
Newly planted trees	½ cubic yard	spread approximately 1 m out from the base (about 12 plastic milk crates)
Existing trees	1-4 cubic yards (depending on size of tree)	spread to the dripline to ensure you are protecting the tree’s root system (see diagram on the next page)
Trees in planter boxes	½-1 cubic yard	depending on depth of box (mulch to the top edge of box)
Shrubs	¼ cubic yard each	about 6 plastic milk crates
Pathways, outdoor classrooms, and muddy areas	1 cubic yard	This will cover about 54 square feet of area (3 ft x 18 ft, or 2 ft x 27 ft)

*Recommended depth for trees and shrubs: spread mulch no more than 6 inches, or 15cm, deep.

Ordering mulch

IMPORTANT: Are you ordering mulch for the first time? Do not order more than one dump truck load. See how long it takes to spread it. You can always order more. One dump truck load is about 12 cubic yards of mulch.

Where? Ask your head caretaker/custodial staff for help in sourcing mulch. Municipalities and cities often offer mulch for free. Check with your board (grounds leads) and Ontario EcoSchools board representative who can also help you source mulch.

When? Best time is to spread mulch is in spring after the snow has melted or in the fall before the snow falls. However, if needed mulch can be ordered during any period when the ground is dry, even in winter. If the ground is too soft for the trucks to deliver mulch, it can be dumped in the parking lot.

What to specify when ordering:

- quantity (in cubic yards)
- the location (approved by principal) for the mulch to be unloaded at your school (as close as possible to the site where it will be used)
- the name of your staff contact person—ask that your staff contact be notified when the mulch arrives to specify the desired drop location



Spreading mulch: No volcanoes, yes donuts

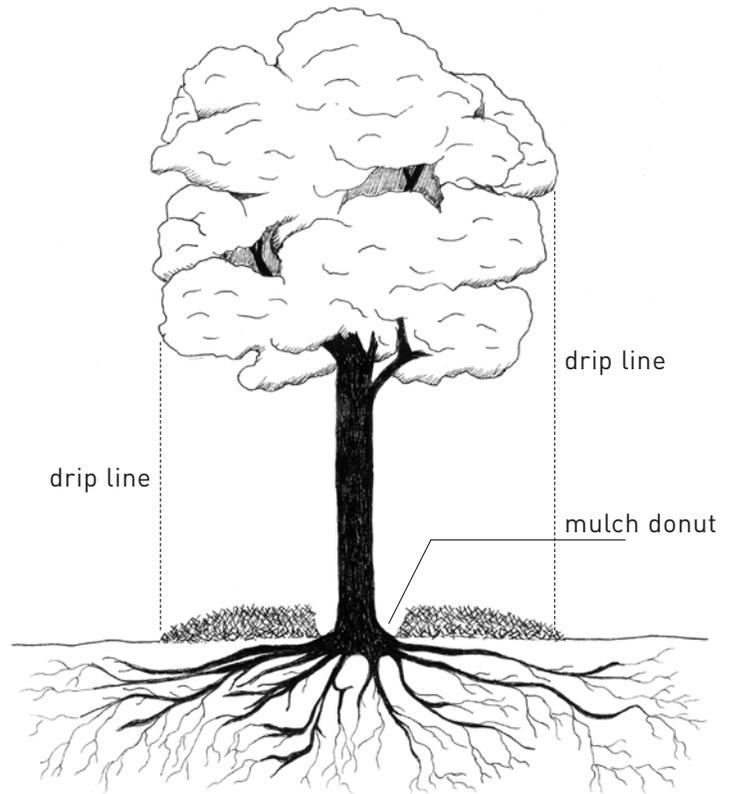
When spreading mulch at the base of a tree avoid placing excessive amounts around the trunk or stems. Adequate space should be available so that the plant can breathe.

Mulch volcano: A common practice is to pile the mulch up around the base of a tree also known as a mulch volcano. This traps moisture against the tree bark thereby encouraging bacterial and fungal disease. Possibly even killing the tree!

Mulch donut: The proper method is to place the mulch in the shape of a donut allowing a 1-2" circle around the base of the tree.



Recommended depth for trees and shrubs: spread mulch no more than 6 inches, or 15cm, deep.



Top mulch mistakes

- **Too much mulch:** excessive mulching can cause suffocation of your trees which can lead to sickness and potentially death.
- **Wood chips are not mulch:** wood chips that have not been aged properly can rob your plant of beneficial nitrogen.
- **Laying green mulch:** green mulch that has not been aged properly or screened will use up a lot of valuable soil nitrogen.
- **No volcanoes, yes donuts:** see left column for more details.
- **Not mulching at all:** the benefits of mulching far exceed the decision not to mulch. Mulch plays a fundamental role in promoting healthy tree growth.