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LANDSCAPE ADVISORY BULLETIN: The Benefits of Mulching

Mulching has many benefits for both plants and soil. These benefits are listed here for your consideration. As expensive as mulching may SEEM, the benefits for your landscape far OUTWEIGH the cost.

1. A good layer of mulch preserves soil moisture by limiting the evaporation of water from the soil profile.
2. Mulch cancels the fluctuation of soil moisture levels, thus evening out the extremes. These extremes can severely limit good plant growth and development. Severe moisture deficiency, for example, destroys the microscopic root hairs which take up water and nutrients.
3. Mulching provides an insulation layer which keeps roots cool in hot temperatures. Cooler root systems exhibit a higher metabolic rate which enhances plant growth and establishment.
4. This same insulation layer keeps roots, the most vulnerable part of the plant, from freezing in frigid temperatures.
5. Ample mulch minimizes the growth of weeds and grasses in planting beds. This is a labor, and thus cost, saving benefit because it greatly reduces the need for cultivation and herbicide use.
6. A mulch layer protects the soil from the impact of rain drops which causes crusting. This crusting is undesirable because it inhibits water infiltration into the soil. Applied moisture tends to run off because of crusting. Crusting also limits the easy flow of oxygen into the root zone where it is required for metabolism.
7. From the preceding, it follows that mulch holds moisture and allows it to penetrate the soil more evenly.

8. Heavy rains and foot traffic can severely pack the soil. Mulching limits this packing.
9. A mulch layer enables maintenance personnel to walk through moist planting beds without getting muddy.
10. Mulch keeps the plants clean by reducing the splashing of muddy water onto plant parts during rain storms.
11. Mulching limits the erosion caused by heavy downpours.
12. Mulch feeds the soil. As mulch decays organic matter is added to the soil. Growing-promoting hormones, along with some toxins and antibiotics that don't harm plants, are formed. These products help to control diseases.
13. Decaying mulch promotes the growth of mycorrhizal fungi which envelop plant roots and enable them to absorb nutrients more readily. Some of these fungi also partially process nutrients for their plant hosts.
14. During mulch decomposition, microorganisms secrete substances which promote soil granulation and thus improve soil structure.
15. The organic matter from decaying mulch buffers chemical effects and soil pH extremes.
16. In many ways, mulch improves plant health and increases life-span.
17. Lastly, organic mulch is aesthetically pleasing as it contrasts with the green of plants. This is true as long as the dyed red mulches are avoided.

This information bulletin was compiled from existing sources for Top Cut Lawn Care, Inc.

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