

Black Mulch

By: Melinda Sperl

Black mulch has been around for a while but it gained popularity when the Trees and HOMES from Hurricane Katrina were imported from New Orleans and infested with termites. The wood was undesirable so the idea was to burn the wood then chip and sell it. It wasn't long after this that the soil yards starting chipping the wood and burning it to sell as Black Mulch. Now, Black Mulch is a way of disposing of treating lumber, Yard Debris & Weeds. They are all burned or dyed black and then chipped then probably blackened again and sold.

While you may like the color, the undesirable effect is the following:

Chemical leaching off the chipped wood is treated lumber. My own particular experience is my puppy grabbing a stick of wood off a pile of mulch in the road from a building in my neighborhood and I thought it was fine. It was a piece of railroad tie heavily coated with chemicals, not something I wanted him chewing on!

The dyes in the mulch, while they are a chemical that the EPA is OK with the environment, they may not be good with the plants in your yard.

As for burnt wood, what lives in a burnt forest? Nothing for many, many years. There have been customers that have called us for consultations and used black mulch. We found several inches of ashes. Plants will not live in ashes and this will take many years to break down into anything that the plant can use for nutrients. Remember, one of the main uses for mulch is nutrients.

Happy Gardening!

Melinda Sperl is a Horticulturalist and the owner of Dream Landscape Design, Inc. You can reach Melinda at Melinda@dreamlandscapedesign.com or www.dreamlandscapedesign.com