

Mulch Volcano

By: Melinda Sperl

Mulch rings around trees should be in the shape of a donut, high on the sides, about 2-4", but low in the middle. Avoid the "mulch volcano" where the mulch is high around the base of the tree and sloping to the ground. The mulch that comes in contact with the tree should be no higher than the root flare which is where the normally straight tree flares out at the bottom.

Tree roots should go straight out from the tree to properly stabilize the tree. If the soil or mulch is piled high around the tree trunk the tree will start putting out new roots at a higher level and those will grow downward and then out to the side which over time can cause surface roots and instability.

Correctly applied mulch rings are a good idea around trees as it can also protect them from lawn equipment and moisture loss. Use of weed fabric is not recommended around trees or shrubs as it can restrict moisture and nutrients from getting to the roots. Mulch is also your best friend for reduction of weeds as weeds come from above. Fabric laid under mulch will not reduce these weeds. Native hardwood mulch is the best mulch for your area. Avoid colored mulches as they are either burned or dyed lumber which can actually harm your trees and plants.

If your tree already has mulch piled too high around the trunk, rake it back as far as you can now to hopefully save your tree for the future. Remember, trees take years to show damage and by the time you notice they are having problems it is usually too late.

Happy Gardening!

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