



## Mulching Tips To Keep Plants Green And Save Water

This week's tip explains how to use mulch to help keep your yard beautiful while reducing water use and weed growth.

A great way to conserve water and help plants stay healthy is to spread mulch in shrub beds, tree rings and flower gardens. Mulch, also known as "top dressing," is a protective covering that is placed around the base of plants, preventing evaporation, frozen roots and weed growth.

Mulch can be organic or inorganic, fine or coarse and, in some landscapes, it may even be rocks. Mulch is readily available at most garden centers, home improvement warehouses and landscape supply stores.

Applying mulch helps drainage, encourages root development, improves soil by making nutrients more available to plants and insulates soil and plants in winter months, while cooling the soil and reducing water use during hot summer months.

### How to Mulch

- In the early spring, hand spread a layer of 1 to 3 inches of mulch around the base of each plant. Use just enough to block the sunlight and keep weeds from growing.
- Do not to allow the mulch to make direct contact with the plants. Make sure to keep a ring about 2 to 3 inches in diameter clear around the base of each plant. Doing so will help plants avoid disease problems.
- When finished, water down the mulch to give it moisture and help it settle into place.
- Rake the mulch when it fades in color. This will expose new organic surfaces that have not faded in the sunlight.
- Replenish mulch when only a thin layer is left. The beauty of mulch is that as it decomposes, it actually enriches your soil, much like compost. By adding mulch, you improve your soil while at the same time reducing the need to water and pull weeds.

When done right, mulching will greatly reduce the amount of trimming or weeding that is needed throughout the growing season, as well as providing very attractive ground covering for your yard.