

# The Benefits of Mulch



Why do gardeners bother to place mulch around landscaping plants? Is it simply due to the aesthetic appeal of mulch in the landscape? Although mulch dramatically improves appearance, the primary reasons for mulching involve plant health and longevity. As most anyone who has experienced the results of gardening with and without mulch will attest, the results are remarkably different. Marjan Kluepfel, HGIC Information Specialist, and Bob Polomski, Extension Consumer Horticulturist, both of Clemson University, have compiled the following list of the benefits of mulching:

- Mulches prevent loss of water from the soil by evaporation.
- Mulches reduce the growth of weeds, when the mulch material itself is weed-free and applied deeply enough to prevent weed germination or to smother existing weeds.
- Mulches keep the soil cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, thus maintaining a more even soil temperature.
- Mulches prevent soil splashing, which not only stops erosion but keeps soil-borne diseases from splashing up onto the plants.
- Mulches prevent crusting of the soil surface, thus improving the absorption and movement of water into the soil.
- Mulches prevent the trunks of trees and shrubs from damage by lawn equipment.
- Mulches help prevent soil compaction.
- Mulches can add to the beauty of the landscape by providing a cover of uniform color and interesting texture to the surface.
- Mulched plants have more roots than plants that are not mulched, because mulched plants will produce additional roots in the mulch that surrounds them.

Walker Miller, Clemson Extension Plant Pathologist, states that mulches are among the best friends a gardener can have in our area!

For more information, visit <http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/HGIC1604.htm>,  
<http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/FieldOps/CGS/mulch3.htm>, and  
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/teletip/scripts/5112.htm>.

*This information was compiled courtesy of Upstate Mulch Products and Services, Inc.*

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