



## **Glen Ridge Shade Tree Commission Tree Mulching**

The recently adopted ordinance by the Glen Ridge Mayor and Council requires that homeowners with publicly owned trees planted on the right of way adjacent to their property must apply proper mulching at the base of the tree or trees in accordance with standards of the Shade Tree Commission.

It is spring time. This is the best time of year to get your mulching done and get your trees in compliance with the new ordinance. Below please find some helpful information regarding how you or your landscaper can properly mulch your trees.

### **Why should I mulch my trees?**

Mulch zones around trees are extremely helpful in protecting the young plant from mowers, string trimmers and other threats.

### **How should I mulch my trees?**

- Start 6 inches from the tree trunk at ground level and mulch outward to the edge of the dripline to a maximum depth of 2 inches to 4 inches.
- Keep a 2-inch to 4-inch layer around, but not touching the base of the tree. Mulch as much of the area under a tree as possible without having mulch touch the trunk.
- Mulch shall be spread at least two feet out in all directions from the center of the tree.
- One layer of woven landscape fabric may be used under mulch in heavy weed areas. Never use plastic sheets under the mulch. Plastic sheets block the passage of air and water and stunt root growth.
- Every spring or every other spring, rake or remove any hard crust and add only enough new mulch to maintain a 2-inch to 4-inch layer. Never build up layers of mulch by adding new mulch on top of the old mulch around a tree.
- Never pile-up a cone of mulch around the tree trunk!

### **What are the best materials for mulching trees?**

- Bark chunks or shredded bark that is at least 3/8 inch in size. Pine bark will last longer than hardwood bark.
- Pine needles
- One-year old wood chips or leaves that were shredded and composted for at least three months

Mulch zones are often applied incorrectly, and actually contribute to the decline of the tree or shrub. The most commonly seen example of this is termed a "**mulch volcano.**"

Mulch Volcano - BAD



Proper Mulching



A mulch volcano occurs when mulch is applied too deep and pushed up against the trunk of the tree, as shown in the photo to the right. **Mulch volcanoes can kill by:**

**Girdling Roots.** If mulch is piled around the trunk, the roots will start to grow into it. These roots will then grow around the trunk in the mulch. As the root grows thicker, it pushes against the trunk, which is also increasing in size. These roots will eventually strangle the trunk and cause eventual death.

**Onset of Disease & Decay.** Mulch piled against a tree trunk traps unnecessary moisture and decaying organic material against the bark. This often leads to the onset of disease and decay around base of trunk which prevents food and energy from traveling up and down the tree. It also creates an ideal environment for fungal and canker development in the trunk, leading to eventual death.

*Say no to the mulch volcano!*



For more information visit us at <http://glenridgenj.org/shadetree.htm> or contact Borough Forester Richard Wolowicz, NJ Tree Expert, via e-mail at [trees@glenridgenj.org](mailto:trees@glenridgenj.org) or by phone at 973-748-8400 ext 202