

## Why Mulch?

Mulch is a protective layer of organic material that is placed over or around plants. It can be used for many reasons, but its most common benefits include the retention of moisture, suppression of weed growth, and protection against exposure. There are also several different varieties of mulch commercially available as well as the aesthetic tastes of the homeowners planning the landscape design. At D&D, we manufacture reds, browns and blacks, since they are the most common in our area. No color is superior to another; it's just a matter of personal preference.

When mulching, homeowners must pay close attention to local rainfall and drainage issues. Thick layers of mulch can reduce water absorption by the soil, while thin layers can fail to insulate the plant. We recommend carefully researching the optimal amount of mulch for each specific plant variety as well as the proper time for its application. Generally, mulch is applied near the beginning of a growing season to help retain heat in the soil overnight. It can also be applied in the fall before the first freeze to help with moisture retention and to provide insulation. Blustery winter winds frequently expose the crowns of plants' roots and drying the entire plant, and mulch helps to prevent this from occurring.

Mulch is also often used in the practice of edging, which involves the management of transition spaces between hardscapes (driveways, paths, and patios) with plant-based softscapes. Edging involves trimming the plant growth along the hardscape to create a clean edge. This helps create a perception of orderliness and regimentation. Powered edging tools are available from several commercial manufacturers, but most homeowners need only concern themselves with these if the area to be edged is particularly large. Most edging projects (such as those along a short driveway or flowerbed) can be managed with a garden hoe or spade. We recommend contacting a landscape company to edge for you.

With the weather finally becoming warm, get out and mulch!

***Paul Doherty***

***President | D&D Mulch and Landscape, Inc.***