

MULCHING

Use of mulch in local gardens is an ideal way to cope with the dry and hot climate and ongoing water scarcity issues in Cyprus. Applying mulch around the base of every plant in your garden or orchard has great benefits that let you:

- **WATER PLANTS LESS** – mulch helps the soil retain water
- **PULL FEWER WEEDS** – mulch inhibits weed growth
- **PROTECT THE SOIL** – mulch forms a protective layer so top soil does not blow away
- **INSULATE THE SOIL** – mulch shields the soil and plant roots from extreme heat or cold
- **PROVIDE A FINISHED LOOK** – mulch makes your garden look neater and cleaner as soil and mud are neatly covered over

WHAT IS MULCH?

It is a layer of organic or inorganic material placed over the root zone of a plant. This added ground cover, such as wood chips, small rocks or pine needles, is placed on top of the soil and serves as a protective layer for the base of the plant.

TYPES OF MULCH

Organic or Natural Mulches include wood chips, hay, compost, pine needles, bark chips, leaves, or grass clippings. Organic mulches eventually decompose adding organic matter to the soil; hence, they need to be supplemented or replaced roughly every 6 months.

Inorganic Mulches include stones, gravel and brick chips. These do not decompose, and hence need not be replaced as often but they can be more expensive. Inorganic mulches need to be replenished as the layers thin out or are compacted down, every 1-3 years.

Organic mulch is available in Cyprus at some local garden centers. Landscape designers, construction companies and carpenters can also provide mulch in the form of wood chips, wood shavings, sawdust, gravel or brick chips as a by-product of construction or landscaping services. You can make your own mulch by using grass clippings, leaves or pine needles.



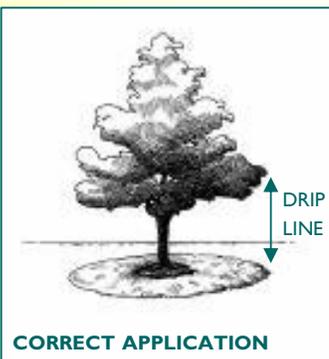
Photos from top to bottom: Decorative wood chip mulch available at local garden centers; Organic mulch application; Wood chip mulch detail; Inorganic (stone) mulch application.

Type of Mulch	Uses / Benefits
Leaves / Woodchips	Use for any plants and trees. Provide nutrients and are aesthetically pleasing.
Grass Clippings	Use for vegetable gardens. Provide nutrients and can be collected from home lawn.
Compost	Use for all soil types and plants. Provides nutrients and improves soil quality and composition but can be expensive.
Pine needles	Use with acid-loving plants such as roses. Provide good weed control and water retention.

HOW TO MULCH

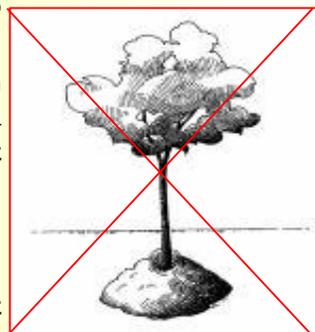
Mulch needs to be applied around the base of plants but can be used throughout plant beds as well.

- Pile mulch in a ring **around** the base of the plant but without mulch resting against the trunk or stem. This is particularly important with organic mulch.
- Use the following depth guidelines to apply mulch:
 - 5 to 8 cm for well-drained soils, and thinner for poorly-drained soils.
 - Minimum of 8 cm to inhibit weed growth.
 - Minimum of 10 cm for organic mulch as it settles in time.
- Mulch out to the plant's drip-line if possible. "Drip-line" is a line on the ground defined by the outer edge of a plant's branches.
- Ensure that any drip irrigation system is beneath the mulch layer.



WHAT NOT TO DO

- **Do NOT** bury any plants, bulbs or seeds with the mulch layer! You will trap them in the ground.
- **Do NOT** mix the mulch into the soil, apply it as a covering layer! Mulch is not fertilizer. It only works on top of the soil.
- **Do NOT** burn the mulch!
- **Do NOT** pile mulch against the base of the trunk.



PROPER MAINTENANCE

- Replenish organic mulch as it decomposes, roughly every six months. Replenish inorganic mulch as it is compacted down, every 1-3 years.
- Rake old mulch to break up matted layers.

COMMON PROBLEMS - BEWARE!

- Mulch that is too thick can trap moisture and prevent oxygen from reaching the roots, causing them to rot.
- Mulch that is too thin may not properly retain moisture and will allow more weed growth.
- Fine-textured mulch can become matted which prevents water and air penetration and enhances weed growth. This needs to be raked regularly to break up clumps.
- Piling mulch, especially moist organic mulch, against the trunk of plants can stress stem tissues, and may lead to insect and disease problems.



LEFKE MULCHING PILOT PROGRAM

Besides saving water, mulching offers an environmentally friendly way to reduce the waste that clogs local dumps. In order to demonstrate the benefits of mulching, SAVE worked with the community of Lefke/Lefka to use a wood chipper to transform large tree and plant trimmings into wood-chip mulch. Since the pilot began in November 2007, **250 tons of trimmings have stayed out of the local dump. An average of 40 tons of mulch is produced a month** and used in local orchards and gardens. The wood chipper has been in continuous operation due to local demand. Additionally, the area has also witnessed a decrease in the amount of burning at local orchards—something that has reduced soil and air pollution.

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