



## URBAN FORESTRY



### Benefits of Mulch

One of the simplest, most effective ways to help trees and plants survive in tough Austin conditions is mulch. Adding mulch provides a range of benefits:

- **Preventing erosion:** Mulch slows down rainfall so it doesn't carry soil off into storm sewers.
- **Suppressing weeds:** Mulch blocks sunlight so weed seeds are not as likely to sprout.
- **Reducing compaction:** Air spaces in soil are important for roots to collect the resources they need. Mulch slowly breaks apart hard, dense soil and loosens it so roots can thrive.
- **Moderating soil temperature:** When sun hits bare soil in summer, temperatures can rise to well above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Mulch blocks the sun and keeps soil cooler. In winter, mulch blankets soil to help prevent freezing.
- **Water conservation:** Reduced temperatures and sunlight mean less evaporation from the soil. Mulched plants need less irrigation during hot weather.
- **Adding nutrients:** Any mulch will decay over time, increasing nutrients and introducing microorganisms to the soil.



## Mulching Procedure

1. Ideally, mulch should be double-ground and composted or have had compost added to it.
2. Spread mulch under as much of the tree's canopy and out to the drip line as possible, being sure to keep mulch a hand width away from the trunk. Mulch should never be touching the trunk as it may facilitate fungal/bacterial development and compromise the tree's structural integrity.
3. Final mulch ring should roughly resemble a pineapple ring, with a circle missing from the middle.
4. Mulch ring depth should not exceed 3".



**Figure 3: Improper Mulching –** Root collar is buried.



**Figure 4: Proper Mulching –** Root collar is visible at the base of the tree and mulch extends to dripline of canopy.

## Other tree care and mulching Resources

- [Grow Green video](#)
- [APF's Mulching 101 English video](#)
- [APF's Mulching 101 Spanish video](#)
- [Young tree care guide](#)