

## **Proper Mulching for Your Home Trees**

With the arrival of spring comes the start of yard maintenance. Mulching your landscape beds is a tradition shared by many homeowners. The Urban Forestry Commission wants to remind you that it is important to follow these techniques when mulching around your trees.

1. **Say No to the Volcano** – You will often see trees that appear to be sitting on top of a large dirt hill. This “volcano” hill is created when mulch is piled up against the base of the tree. Year after year, more mulch is added, and the volcano is born. This damages the tree in several ways.
  - a. The mound can weaken the bark of the tree, making it susceptible to insects and disease
  - b. A volcano mound can lead to “girdling” roots. The roots of the tree spiral around the mound, restricting growth and potentially killing the tree.
  - c. Large mounds of mulch can harbor excess moisture in the soil, leading to root rot and other diseases.
2. **Use a Donut Shape** – Instead of piling mulch up against the trunk of your tree, leave space around the base of the tree. Spread your mulch outward from the base. Aim for a thickness of 2-4 inches, depending on the composition of your mulch. Make your beds have at least a radius of 3 feet. It is recommended to extend the edges of your beds to the edge of the canopy drip line.
3. **Invest in Quality** – Mulch is an important supplement to your home landscape. Nutrients are added back to the soil as the organic mulch decomposes. Most home soils are poor in comparison to natural, undisturbed soils. These added nutrients can help improve the health and quality of your trees.
4. **Skip a Year** – Mulch days can be a yearly tradition for many families. The idea of skipping a year of mulch can sound odd, but by doing so, you may improve the look and quality of your home landscape. Depending on the composition and thickness of your mulch, the mulch buried beneath the top layer may not be decomposing at a fast rate due to the lack of oxygen. Turn your mulch beds with a hard rake or a pitchfork to uncover the packed mulch. You may be surprised to find that the color and structure from previous years is still present in this underground layer.

For more information on how you can effectively and safely care for your home trees, visit our [webpage](#) for helpful resources and guides.