

# Mulching

## do's and don'ts

(caring for our urban forest one tree at a time)

**Mulch** is a layer of organic material (such as compost, shredded wood or bark) or inorganic material (such as pea gravel) that is spread on top of soil. It creates a healthy, attractive yard that requires less water and weeding.

### Why should you mulch trees?

Mulching trees provides numerous benefits by helping to:

- Improve overall tree health and soil conditions
- Provide needed nutrients
- Help with water conservation by reducing moisture loss
- Suppress the growth of weeds
- Protect the tree's roots from extreme temperature changes through insulation
- Reduce the likelihood of certain pests/diseases
- Protect the tree trunk from mechanical damage



Together we can  
**ReTree** YYC!



## How much is too much?

In order to get the full benefits of mulching, you want to have a mulching depth of 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 centimetres). Too much mulch can lead to excessive moisture at the roots, nutrient deficiencies, fluctuating moisture, girdling roots and encourage pests and rodents. Often this happens over time, so be sure to check the mulch depth each time.



## How to mulch:

### Mulching a tree for the first time?

Put a 5 to 10 centimetre layer of mulch around the base of the tree leaving space to expose the trunk. When mulch is piled against the trunk it may negatively impact the health of the tree.

### What do I do if I am re-mulching?

If mulch is present around your tree, be sure to check the depth. If it is already 5 to 10 centimetres deep, work on improving the mulch that is there by breaking up any large pieces with a shovel. This is also a great time to make sure the trunk is exposed and the mulch hasn't piled against it. If this is the case, clear the mulch back approximately 10 centimetres from the base.

### Are there alternatives to buying mulch?

You can use what you have in your own yard with a little bit of preparation! If you have wood chips, tree bark and/or leaves around your yard already, you can put them in your composter for two to three months. After this period of time you will have usable mulch that you can place around established trees and shrubs.