

Can you over mulch a tree?

Spring is slowly unfolding and gardeners are itching to get outside to prepare the soil for the growing season. And one ritual is to mulch the beds. Mulching can provide nutrients to the soil and help retain moisture.

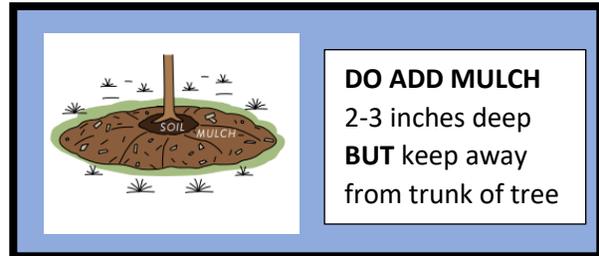
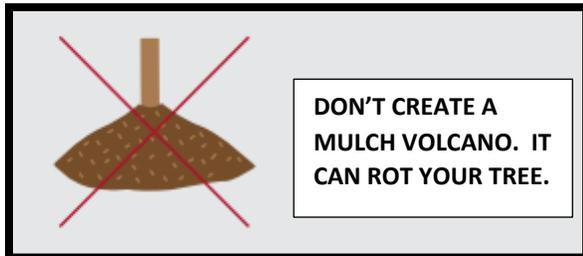
However, The City of Berkley Tree Board wants to stress:

Do not create a mulch volcano around your tree!

There are two reasons why mulch volcanoes are bad for trees. The first is the possible impact on the roots that grow near the surface. These roots are seeking oxygen, and too much mulch can lead to stressed and dying roots and a stressed tree is more vulnerable to insect and diseases.

The most important reason to not pile mulch into a volcano shape around the base of the tree is to protect the tree trunk. If the bark surrounding the base of the tree is kept constantly moist, over time the conductive tissue beneath the bark will decay. This will negatively impact the tree's ability to transfer its nutrients and water upward and downward and increases the probability of tree death!

The proper way to mulch a tree is to create a mulch donut. The mulch should start about two inches away from the tree trunk and should only be about 2-3 inches deep.



For more information:

Cue, Kathleen "Mulch Volcanoes – A Harmful Practice for Trees" University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, n.d., <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/dodge/mulch-volcanoes-a-harmful-practice-for-trees/>

"A Pocket Guide to Planting Trees" State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources, ©2020 <https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/treecare/planting/pocket-guide.pdf>

Landis, Joy "Nightmare results for appliers of volcano mulch", Michigan State University MSU Extension, May 16, 2008, https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/nightmare_results_for_appliers_of_volcano_mulch