



Too Mulch of A Good Thing

The addition of mulch can give a landscape a fresh look while providing numerous benefits to plants. However, too much mulch can have a detrimental effect on trees and plants. It is not uncommon to see mountains of mulch piled against tree trunks. We call these excessive piles 'volcanoes', and they are not a good thing. Excessive mulch can actually smother root systems and create environments that inhibit growth.

The lower-most portion of trunk, or root collar, is composed of specialized cells which are not adapted to resist constant soil moisture. When excessive mulch or soil is piled against the root collar and trunk, it can inhibit the necessary exchange of oxygen and interfere with the downward movement of food to the roots. This eventually leads to root dieback, reduced water uptake, and ultimately, tree death.

In addition, excessive mulch encourages shallow root systems. Too much mulch reduces oxygen availability, causing roots deeper in the soil to die. Shallow root systems, lead to stress during drought periods. Secondary pathogens are then able to attack these weakened trees.

Most plants benefit from only a 2-3 inch layer of composted, organic-matter mulch. As mulch slowly decomposes over time, microbial activity increases, creating beneficial soil conditions which, in turn, release nutrients. When applied properly, mulch also protects the base of trees from weed whacker damage and reduces resource competition with turf grass and weeds. In addition, mulch tends to stabilize soil temperatures and increase soil water holding capacity, which conserves moisture during drought conditions, thereby minimizing water use.

Be cautious of inorganic materials, including black plastic. Plastic may discourage weeds, but can also interfere with normal gas exchange of the roots. Plastic also contributes to the development of shallow root systems.

Clearly, the proper mulch and method of application can directly improve the health and vitality of landscape plants. To determine if your planting beds or trees are properly mulched, inspect the plant material and soil conditions of the area. If mulch is present, check the depth. Where mulch is piled against the stems or tree trunks, pull it back away several inches. Do not add mulch if there is already a sufficient layer. Simply raking old mulch to break up matted layers may be enough to refresh its appearance.

Hartney Greymont introduced our own mulch last year called 'Yard Life' mulch. 'Yard Life' is a blend of aged and composted tree residue by-products. Research has shown this mulch closely matches the

organic layer of the forest, creating a rich, rooting environment for trees and shrubs, resulting in healthy, vital plants and soil. Judging from the demand for this new product, our clients have noticed the results in their landscape too.

Proper mulching is an essential component to effective plant healthcare. If you have concerns about your current mulch conditions, talk to your arborist for an evaluation and recommendations to best manage your landscape. ■



Excessive mulch against trunks can smother root systems and lead to premature death.

Right Tree, Right Site

There is something exciting about planting a new tree that feels just great. Trees are permanent additions to your property and, therefore, require thought and planning when selecting the right one.

Determining the proper species for the proposed planting area is critical to saving time and money avoiding future disappointment. As with any worthwhile investment, it is essential to take time to investigate and select wisely. Choosing a site to plant a tree, or choosing the proper tree for a given site, is a decision not to be taken lightly. Here are some basic guidelines to help make that decision. Of course, our arborists can walk through the steps with you to ensure your investment reaps future return.

PLANT AND SITE FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

Hardiness: Make sure the tree is adapted to the temperature extremes of our geographic region.

Light exposure: Note how many hours of direct sunlight the planting site receives.

Space constraints: Allow adequate room as the plant matures both above and below ground.

Form and function: Consider species attributes; i.e. evergreen vs. deciduous foliage, shade tree vs. ornamental qualities.

Soil characteristic: Select species suited for the soil types present at the site.

Pest problems: Choose insect and disease resistant varieties, if available.

Drainage: Match species tolerant to the moisture and drainage conditions of the soil. ■



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This year's moderate spring weather, with bountiful moisture and cool temperatures, has helped evergreen shrubs recover from winter damage. A wide variety of shrubs experienced more extensive winter damage this past season than in many, many years. In fact, a significant number of established plants died over the winter. One observation: long time tested cultivars and species well tended and planted in the correct location came through a bitter winter with little or no damage. However, many new varieties of plants installed off site did not fare so well.



As one of our core values, safety is paramount to our organization and our clients. Hartney Greymont recently joined a self-insured loss group in an effort to better control our costs in the competitive environment in which we operate. Our continued great safety performance should translate to savings benefiting our employees and clients.

Thank you for your flexibility in adapting to our new policy adopted last year of leaving invoices for lawn care and liquid services at the time of service. We have received overwhelming positive feedback on this change. If for any reason this does not work in your personal situation, please let us know.

As we forecasted in February, this year also brought widespread infestation of winter moth, cankerworm, fruit worm, and of course, our old

friend, gypsy moth. Extensive extreme feeding by these pests can defoliate and weaken trees severely. We are using a bio-rational pesticide called Conserve® and achieving great results controlling these pests. This material is produced by naturally occurring soil bacteria, and is the basis for an entirely new class of materials to treat damaging insect pests. It is quite possible these pests will cause greater damage and be seen in more areas next year. This will necessitate scheduling protective applications in early Spring to ensure timely applications and effectively control these defoliating insects.

Thank you for your past patronage. We look forward to serving you again in the future.

Not All Birches Are the Same

Recent research has presented compelling evidence for returning white-barked birch trees to the landscape. Many birch trees suffer damage from the bronze birch borer, a destructive and often difficult pest to manage. Long term research conducted by Ohio State University has provided evidence to support what our own observation has told us: The bronze birch borer can be managed effectively, and white-barked birch trees can be successful in the landscape.

Bronze birch borer is a native pest which feeds primarily on vascular tissue in the trunk and branches of trees. Infested trees usually decline over time, but can be killed in just one season. In native forests, bronze birch borer acts as a secondary insect, affecting only previously stressed trees with weakened natural defense systems. For example, drought stress has been shown to predispose birch to bronze birch borer attack.



Selecting native birch species, while enhancing a property's beauty, can reduce insect problems

Research initiated in 1979, consisted of 1200 trees of seven birch species, including European white birch, Asian species, as well as three species native to our region: paper birch, gray or white spire birch, and river birch. The results are striking. All European and Asian species were killed by 1999, however the native species fared much better, particularly river birch, exhibiting a 98% survival rate. Although river birch is the most borer-resistant, it is not truly "white barked", as its exfoliating bark can be cinnamon brown to salmon pink in color.

The high survival rate of the native species is remarkable, as it occurred in the face of several severe drought and massive borer outbreaks over the 20-year study. The tested trees were also without the benefit of irrigation or insecticide controls. These results stand in stark contrast to historic claims of bronze birch borer resistance in Asian species, and recent claims of resistant European varieties.

As is often the case, proper plant health care is the key to effective insect management. Providing ecological requirements of plants is the first critical step in successful landscape design. Birch trees planted in sites they are not adapted to will be stressed, creating prime candidates for borer attack. For example, paper birch is an ecological pioneer species requiring full sun. Therefore, planting paper birch in the shade may cause as much stress as long-term drought.



A European white birch displays symptoms associated with bronze birch borer

Successful long-term survival of white-barked birch trees is a function of matching the physical requirements to local environment and selecting the proper species to meet the goals of the landscape design. ■

Our Commitment to Safety

You may have noticed a safety audit being conducted while one of our crews was caring for your property. Members of our safety team ensure any potential safety hazards have been identified, and that all proper safety procedures and equipment are in place. It takes only a few minutes, but is a vital part of our safety program.

Recently, Hartney Greymont's employees collectively revised our vision and values statements, originally crafted over 12 years ago. One of our six core values is safety. Specifically, "We believe in providing the safest workplace possible through training and education. We will not compromise employee or client safety for any reason." This means not only our personal safety, but also the safety of you and your belongings.

Working safely and avoiding accidents translates to an injury free environment. This brings peace of mind as our crews are constantly making decisions about how to best protect your property. Further, this directly results in lower insurance rates, which helps contain the costs of our services.

In addition to safety audits, the development of new technological innovations is making our equipment safer to use. Further, our commitment to company-wide, weekly safety meetings have helped for years to ensure focus on this important facet of our job.

More valuable than safety equipment is the ongoing training of our people. New employees undergo a full day dedicated to safety before ever joining a crew, while skill development and training continues in the field at all levels.

Hartney Greymont's commitment to safety is at the core of our success. The real value of our commitment to safety is the peace of mind for both our clients and employees as we care for your landscape. ■



For Your Convenience...

Notify your arborist when you schedule work and we will see that your credit card is debited in lieu of invoicing when work is completed.



GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION

If you are not satisfied with any treatment or completed job, let us know. We will resolve the situation to your satisfaction; no questions about it. Our goal is to not only make sure your trees, shrubs, and lawn are as healthy as possible, but also to provide you with the peace of mind a satisfaction guarantee can bring.

Did You Know?

Hartney Greymont provides:

LANDSCAPE SERVICES

- Design
- Planting
- Large Tree Moving

TREE AND SHRUB CARE SERVICES

- Shade and Ornamental Tree Pruning
- Shrub Pruning
- Cabling and Bracing
- Tree and Shrub Fertilization
- Insect and Disease Diagnosis/Control
- I.P.M. and Plant Health Care Programs

LAWN CARE SERVICES

- Fertilization, Weed, Insect and Disease Control Programs
- I.P.M. Lawn Health Care Program
- Seed and Sod Installations
- Over-Seeding, Aeration, Thatching
- Organic Treatment Programs

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