

This mulch selection guide was developed by members of the Mulch & Soil Council to assist consumers in selecting the proper mulch product for your intended use. In addition to the guidelines shown on the selection guide table, consumers, are advised to consider the following additional criteria for product use:

1.) Depth of Application: For most outdoor application purposes (especially weed control and moisture conservation) mulch products should be applied at a depth of 2 to 4 inches.

2.) Bed Preparation: Proper preparation of the planting area before using mulch products is highly recommended.

A.) Soil Conditioner: Remove grass and weeds from the bed surface. Loosen the soil with a shovel or spade to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Cover the bed with 4 to 6 inches of aged, shredded mulch and till into the soil thoroughly.

B.) Weed Control: Remove grass and weeds from the bed surface. Cover the bed with 2 to 4 inches of shredded mulch. If larger decorative mulch will be applied over the shredded mulch, reduce the shredded mulch base to 1 to 3 inches.

3.) Avoid Excessive Mulch Buildup: Mulching beds over several years may raise the bed level too high for shrubs and perennials. When bed depth rises above the base of shrubs, remove 2 to 3 inches of the underlying mulch material and save it for other planting uses. The humus created by decomposing bark mulch is an excellent planting medium for pots and planters.

4.) Nitrogen Adjustment: Mulches may tie up nitrogen as they decompose. This is a normal process and may be easily compensated for by gently working a specially formulated fertilizer

(such as a 2-1-1 ratio like 16-9-12, 18-11-12, or 20-10-10) into the soil before mulching. Fertilizer application rates depend on the type of mulch used. After applying fertilizer and mulching, follow recommended fertilizer programs to maintain good plant growth.

Application Rates/ 500 Sq. Ft. of Mulched Area		
4 - 8 lbs	2.5 - 5.0 lbs	1.4 - 2.8 lbs
Hardwood Mulch	Cypress Mulches	Pine Nuggets
	Pine Mulch	Pine Mini-nuggets
	Western Mulch	Western Barks

5.) Look for Low Wood Content: Bark decomposes slower than wood, maintains its color longer, and presents a uniform product appearance. When selecting your bark mulch products, look for quality materials containing less wood content.

Look for the MSC Certification Logo to identify approved mulch and soil products.

CERTIFIED PRODUCT

	Premium Potting Soil
	Standard Potting Soil
	Landscape Soil & Soil Amendment
	Mulch

This product has been registered and tested for conformance to the standards of the Mulch & Soil Council for the indicated product category. The Mulch & Soil standards do not contain a product category for pesticides, and this certification mark does not apply to pesticide claims. For more information, refer to the M&SC web site at www.mulchandsoilcouncil.org.

Mulch & Soil Council

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Consumer Advice from the



Mulch Selection Guide



Mulch Product Selection Guide

	Pine Nuggets	Pine Mininuggets	Pine Mulch	Cypress	Cypress Blends	Hardwood Mulch	Western Mulch	Western Pathway	Western Medium	Western Large
Characteristics										
Color ¹	Reddish Brown	Dark Brown	Light Brown	Golden Brown	Golden Brown	Dk Brown to Black	Reddish Brown	Reddish Brown	Reddish Brown	Reddish Brown
Longevity ²	Multiple	Multiple	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Multiple	Multiple
Moisture Retention	Low	Medium	High	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
pH ³	(N)	(N)	(SA)	(N)	(N)	(SA)	(SA)	(SA)	(N)	(N)
Particle Size	1.2-3.5 in	0.5–1.5 in	< 1.5 in	< 3 in	< 3 in	< 3 in	< 1 in	0.25–0.5 in	0.5–2 in	1.75–3 in
Wood Content ⁴	< 15%	< 15%	> 15%	< 15%	> 15 %	< 15%	> 15%	< 15%	< 15%	< 15%
Benefits										
Decoration	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent
Erosion Control	Fair	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Fair	Fair
Moisture Control	Fair	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Fair
Soil Conditioning	Fair	Good	Excellent	Fair	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good
Weed Control	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good
Applications										
Edging	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Fair
Drainage Areas	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Fair
Planting Beds	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Planters	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good
Play Areas	Fair	Good	Excellent	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Fair
Slopes & Grades	Fair	Fair	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Fair	Fair

¹Color may vary depending on regional tree species.

²Longevity is a rating of how long the product substantially maintains its original appearance and /or function. The rating for a single season or multiple season is an average based on a temperate climate and moderate intensity sun exposure.

³pH ratings include: (A) = Acidic; (SA) = Slightly Acidic; (N) = Neutral; (SB) = Slightly Basic; (B) = Basic

⁴Wood Content Percentage is measured as a percentage of wood to total product weight.