



Understanding the Community Tree Management Ordinance Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Program

Mulching

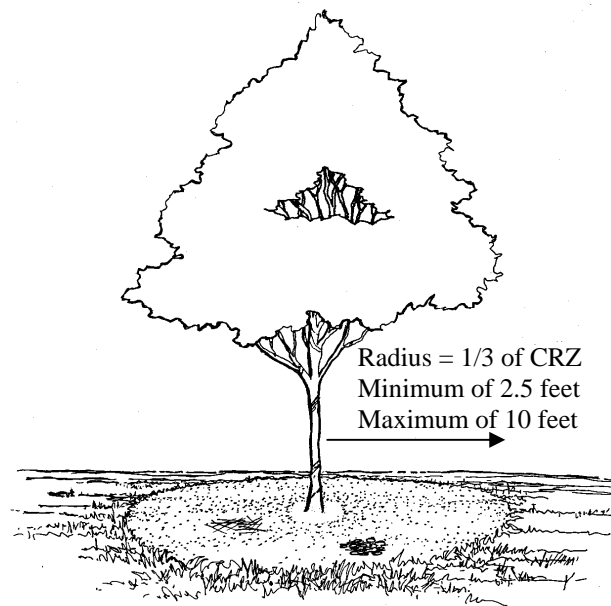
Mulching is one of the best and most economical ways to improve tree health. Properly applied organic mulch will accomplish many goals such as increase water infiltration, decrease competition among plants, return organic materials to the soil, decrease water runoff, decrease soil surface temperatures, protect the roots and trunk from injury, and slowly decompact soils by stimulating organic activity. In the piedmont region of Georgia, 90% of tree roots are found in the top 18 inches of soil. Because of a lack of oxygen, tree roots grow out instead of down. Mulch needs to be primarily applied on the roots within the critical root zone (CRZ)* to be most affective.

Mulching Standards

- Individual trees, newly planted trees, and trees conserved in groups of less than ten must be mulched
- Trees must be mulched to the outer 1/3 of their critical root zone (CRZ)*
- Mulch must have a minimum radius of 2.5 feet and a maximum required radius of 10 feet; applications of mulch beyond 10 feet may provide additional benefits to conserved trees
- Mulch must be applied on an annual basis
- Mulch must be composed of organic materials; grass clippings, plastic, rocks, and un-aged wood chips are not suitable mulching material
- Mulch must be applied to a depth of 3 – 4 inches
- Mulch may not be applied within 6 inches of the trunk. Mulch is not allowed to be piled on the trunk



“Volcano” mulching harms trees by reducing soil oxygen levels and increasing the likelihood for root defects



A diagram of a properly mulched tree

For more information, contact the Athens-Clarke County Community Forestry Coordinator at (706)613-3561 voice, (706)613-3566 fax, or by e-mail at forester@co.clarke.ga.us.