



Shelter in Yard Tips and Tasks:

Landscaping Mulches



Mulch plays an important role in residential landscapes. Mulches are often promoted as being environmentally friendly and a desirable landscape practice. Organic mulches usually come from plant materials and include pine needles, pine bark nuggets, shredded western cedar and even ground or shredded rubber. Inorganic mulches consist of rock, gravel and brick chips. These inorganic mulches tend not to burn and are safe to use in any setting.

Mulch can:

- Reduce the water requirements of plants
- Cool soil temperatures
- Reduce the occurrence of weeds
- Control soil erosion and dust
- Prevent soil compaction
- Visually enhance the landscape



Inorganic mulches such as decomposed granite, gravel, or rocks offer superior fire-proofing as landscape mulches and should be used when mulch is needed within 5 feet of buildings or any combustible structural materials such as siding or decking. Any fallen or windblown leaf litter or debris that has collected on the rocks must be regularly removed to prevent small debris fires from igniting structures.

SCCFSC strongly discourages the use of shredded redwood or cedar bark (sometimes called "gorilla hair") as mulch in landscaping.



From 5' to 30' away from structures, composted wood chips are the best choice of the materials tested for residential landscape use. They are organic and will still burn, but tend to burn at the lowest speed and lowest flame length. If this material is ignited, it could still ignite siding, plant debris and other combustible materials. The smoldering of this product could also go undetected by firefighters during a wildfire.

For more resources, visit our [Shelter in Yard](#) page on the [Santa Clara Council FireSafe Council](#) website.