



Uncanoonuc Mt. Perennials

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MULCH AND THE PERENNIAL GARDEN

YEAR-ROUND MULCH: A layer of organic material applied over the soil between perennials (and annuals, trees and shrubs in a mixed planting). This mulch is left in place all year and replenished occasionally as it decays.

BENEFITS

- *Helps control weeds
- *Conserves soil moisture
- *Moderates soil temperature
- *Has aesthetic appeal
- *Prevents soil erosion
- *Adds organic matter to the soil as it breaks down

MATERIALS TO AVOID

- *Straw
 -highly flammable, unattractive
- *Hay or manure
 - ... loaded with weed seeds
- *Peat moss
 -crusts and prevents rain from penetrating into the soil

MATERIALS TO USE

- **Shredded bark mulch or bark chips
 - ...highly decorative, readily available
- *Wood chips, shredded leaves, salt marsh hay
- *Pine needles, sawdust
 -lime before applying or use only around acid-loving plants

- *Crushed stone, marble chips
 -best in rock gardens
- *Fabric weed barriers
 -useful for commercial or other large plantings and where no digging, dividing or additional interplanting is planned

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

- *A 1-3" layer of mulch is recommended. (More shallow around perennials, deeper between groupings and under trees and shrubs.) Raking to ensure uniformity of depth results in a more attractive and more effective mulch.

- *Keep the mulch off the crown and stems of perennials and don't let it pile up around the trunks of the trees and shrubs to avoid rot and other disease problems.

- *Replenish the mulch as it decays. Be sure to add only the amount needed. The idea is to top dress, not to bury your garden.

- *An annual spring application of granular fertilizer will provide your plants with needed nutrients and replace any nitrogen the decaying mulch may have "robbed" from the soil.

NOTE: See reverse for information on Winter Mulch

WINTER MULCH: A layer of organic material applied over the crowns (tops) of perennials during early winter. This mulch is left in place all winter and removed in early spring.

BENEFITS

- *Keeps the soil from repeatedly freezing and thawing which can heave perennials out of the ground resulting in damage or death.
- *Prevents desiccation ("winter burn") of evergreen perennials by drying winter winds.
- *Often offers enough protection to allow marginally hardy plants to survive.

MATERIAL TO USE

- **Salt marsh hay
- *Evergreen boughs
- *Pine needles
- *Straw

(Yes, a deep constant snow cover *is* the ideal winter mulch. Can you depend on this blessing where you garden?)

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

- *A 6-12" layer over perennials is recommended.
If using evergreen boughs place them in double criss-crossed layers.
- *Remember the function of a winter mulch is *NOT* to keep the soil or plants warm, but to keep the soil frozen. In Southern NH apply winter protection between Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- *Timing is important in removing winter mulch. Take half off in mid-late March and remove the rest about two weeks later. This prevents smothering and lets any new growth harden off for cold spring weather ahead.
- *We recommend winter mulch for any plants set out after September, heaths and heathers, modern roses, any marginally hardy perennials.
- **Most plants we sell *DO NOT NEED* any winter mulch. The single most important factor in winter survival is proper placement of the plant. Make sure existing sun/shade, soil, and especially drainage conditions match the needs of the chosen plants.
- *There are many different approaches to protecting roses. Burying the plant base under 18" of salt marsh hay, topping with upended bushel baskets full of shredded leaves, mounding soil over the crowns 10-12" deep in late fall, and using special "rose cones" are all common methods. Talk to other rose growers in your area, experiment, and discover what method best suits you.