

What is the best mulch?



Ah, such a simple question. And it requires a complex answer.

Mulch is defined as any unprocessed product used to cover the soil in your garden. It can be organic or inorganic, green, grey, brown, or multicolored. Whatever you choose, it provides many benefits to your garden. It decreases weeds, it decreases water evaporation, it keeps the soil cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, and it breaks down to add nutrients to the soil. And, best of all, it looks good! The most popular mulches include shredded bark, wood chips, and cocoa bean hulls. Pine needles are a great mulch for acid loving plants like camellias and azaleas.

Inorganic mulches, like rocks, have their place also. You can design pathways and make decorative edges with small rocks and use boulders for architectural interest.

The best type of mulch depends on the location and main purpose. The best advantage of organic mulches is that it breaks down over time to provide nutrients to your soil. Yet landscape cloth placed over already-weeded soil can work beautifully for non-planted areas when topped with a decorative mulch.

You can purchase mulch by the bag at most garden centers. If have a large vehicle, larger quantities of mulch are available for free in San Diego at Miramar Landfill and to buy at El Corazon in Oceanside. Some soil yards will deliver larger orders for a fee.

Below are great references to learn more about the best mulch for your garden:

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/ENVIRON/mulchtbl.html>

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/ENVIRON/mulches.html>

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/ucmgplacer/files/166280.pdf>

http://sonomamg.ucanr.edu/Sonoma_Gardener_Articles/Mulch--a_Gardeners_Best_Friend/