

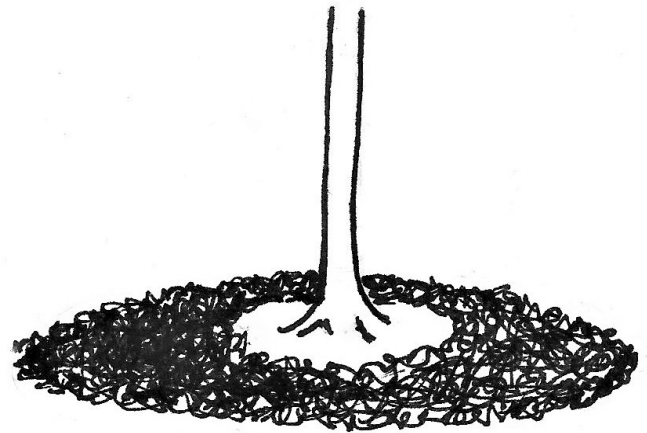
# Be Kind to Trees. Mulch Properly.

Research proves a mulch ring placed 3 to 6 feet around a tree can almost double the growth rate of the tree, but only if you do it properly.

**Step 1:** Remove sod 3 feet out in all directions. 6 feet is even better.

**Step 2:** Start mulch 3 to 6 inches away from the trunk. The best mulch for trees is organic wood chips. Raked leaves are just as effective. The thickness of the mulch layer should be somewhere between 2 and 4 inches deep.

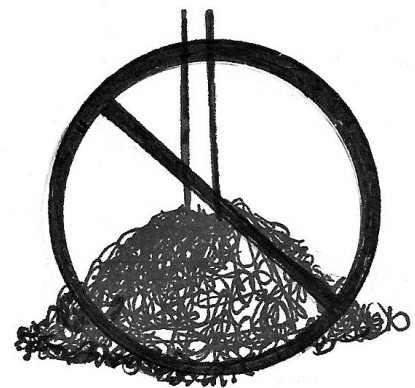
**Step 3:** Maintain. Over time the mulch will blow up next to the trunk and breakdown. The mulch ring should be replenished yearly. Start by carefully pulling the mulch back from the trunk, and then add enough new mulch for a maximum depth of 4 inches.



**A properly mulched tree should appear to have a slightly raised ring around the tree like a thinly sliced bagel, not a volcano.**

Over time mulch or soil piled up on the trunk of a tree rots and decays the bark layer of the tree, kills the cambium layer area of tree growth and eventually rots the heartwood of the tree, killing the tree. This can occur with trees of any age.

Deep piles of mulch also excludes oxygen from the soil. This results in root development up into the mulch layer, not down into the soil.



**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

Master Gardener  
Johnson County

For lawn & garden questions please contact:

Johnson County Extension Master Gardeners Hotline  
garden.help@jocogov.org or 913-715-7050