

# The Greener Side

By Jeff Webeler  
**Much About Mulch**



Mulch has many benefits like suppressing weed growth, reduce water loss, regulating soil temperature and as organic mulches decompose they add valuable nutrients and improve soil texture. But I suspect most people apply mulch to improve the look of their landscape plantings. So, for whatever the reason, it's a good thing.

**Pine Bark** makes an attractive brown colored mulch. Sold in bags with various particle sizes, from shredded to large-sized particles, called nuggets. I prefer shredded pine bark for my annuals and perennials beds, it is finer in texture and can be worked into the soil as a soil conditioner each year.

**Pine Needles** are becoming more popular in our area. Originates in Georgia and sold in bales. Pine needles tend to interlock and stay in place better than most other mulches, especially on a slope. It is very attractive and functional, allowing air, water and nutrients to penetrate easily to the soil surface.

Pine bark and pine needle mulch has

been recommended around acid loving plants like azalea, rhododendron and holly plants, this is fine however understand it will take years for it to have much of a change in the soil pH.

**Cypress Bark Mulch** A reddish brown bark from cypress trees in Florida, have the benefit of the cypress oils in the bark and break down very slowly, maintaining color over a long time. Expect to pay more for cypress as the freight from Florida and has limited supply.

**Hardwood Bark Mulch** is very attractive dark chocolate brown and the most common. Sold in bags or in bulk. Be sure the mulch is a shredded bark, many companies are grinding up pallets and adding a colorant to make wood look like bark.

Stay away from wood chips and fresh sawdust. They break down quickly, robbing the soil of nitrogen, leaving your plants yellow and unhealthy. If you have an abundant source of these type products they should be composted for a length of time before using.

Too much of a good thing can lead to problems. More than 3 to 4 inches at a time won't get into trouble, but much more should be avoided.

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