Mulching Checklist

Created: 4/7/2015

# Tasks:

☐ **Plastic**

☐ **Black and red plastic mulch will increase the soil temperature, allowing you to plant summer crops earlier.**

☐ **Many soil-borne diseases can be greatly reduced or even eliminated by using plastic mulch.**

☐ **Weeds are reduced and crops often see an increased rate of growth compared with bare soil**

*Specifically, cucumbers, squash, melons, tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers do very well when planted over a plastic mulch.*

☐ **Because water can’t permeate the plastic, you will have to water your garden with a drip irrigation system or soaker hoses that are placed under the plastic.**

☐ **Expensive, difficult to remove, and not environmentally sustainable.**

☐ **Not as attractive as natural mulches.**

☐ **Wood Chips**

☐ **Look lovely, last a long time, and are relatively inexpensive**

*Because they last so long, they are a good choice for walkways and perennial beds.*

☐ **Do a good job suppressing weeds, but you should make sure you cover your planting beds with a covering of mulch that is at least three inches deep.**

☐ **Great at retaining moisture and keeping the soil temperature stable, but are less effective than plastic at preventing soil-borne diseases.**

☐ **As they break down, nitrogen is depleted from the top layer of soil, which means you may have to fertilize more often.**

☐ **Not the best choice for vegetable gardens because you will have to remove the mulch before putting in a new crop.**

☐ **Pine Needles**

☐ **Last even longer than wood chips.**

☐ **Great for controlling moisture and deterring insect pests.**

☐ **Great for acid-loving plants like evergreens, hydrangeas, blueberry bushes, strawberries, and fruit trees**

*They are acidic and therefore will lower your garden’s pH over time*

☐ **A bit wispy, so require a thick layer to keep them in place and suppress weeds.**

☐ **Straw**

☐ **In most areas straw is easy to find and very inexpensive.**

☐ **Is not the most attractive mulch, but is great for a backyard vegetable garden.**

☐ **Regulates moisture and keeps temperatures even.**

☐ **A thick layer will suppress weeds**

*Be careful as some contain seeds that will sprout and grow in your garden.*

☐ **Quite desirable to rodents, slugs, and snails**

*If these pests are a problem in your garden, straw might not be for you.*