

Beware the Mulch Volcano!

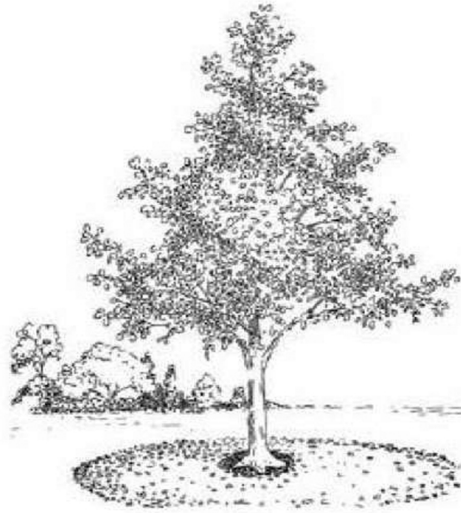
Many homeowners and landscape companies are joining a trend that leads to the death of trees in our village-- mulch volcanoes. It's a funny name for a serious problem-- piling mulch or wood chips against the bark of a tree. While you may think this looks attractive, it is actually causing the slow death of your tree.

Mulching around your trees, especially newly planted trees, is a good thing but a properly landscaped tree should have a visible, uncovered root flare. A root flare is a gradual widening at the base of a tree where the straight trunk transitions to the large, main roots. If your tree has been improperly mulched or planted, and the tree/soil line looks more like a lollipop stick coming out of the ground, you need to remove that excess mulch and soil.

If you like mounding your mulch, keep it in the shape of a wide, very low doughnut. You do not want the mounded mulch to eventually wash inward and obscure the trunk's flare:



Improper Mulch
Root flare buried &
Mulch piled high up against the trunk



Proper Mulch
Root flare visible at the base of the tree &
Mulch extends to dripline of canopy

Burying a trunk and root flare makes both young and old trees more likely to die. Whether it's a mulch volcano or a new flower bed surrounding a big tree in the yard, many homeowners think they're improving their yard when sadly they're losing value by making new landscaping more likely to fail, and old trees more likely to succumb to illness. Changing this trend will require a neighborly word-of-mouth campaign. Do your neighbors a favor and let them know about the importance of maintaining root flares-- and to beware the mulch volcano!