

MULCHES FOR RESTORATION & MITIGATION PROJECTS

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Mulching will improve most planting projects. The benefits of mulching can include soil moisture conservation, weed suppression, improved soil structure and nutrient regime, and reduction of surface run-off, soil erosion, and soil compaction. The benefits vary based on the kind of mulch you choose; the following table indicates the relative characteristics of the most common materials.

Material	Erosion control	Weed suppression	Nutrient provision	Availability	Longevity	Recommended depth	Sources	Installation cost	Typical material cost w/o delivery	Cost per sq. yard
Medium ground bark	Medium	High	Low	High	Medium–High	2–4”	Quarries, landscape suppliers, garden stores ¹	Medium	\$26–30/ cubic yard	\$2.16–2.50 (3” deep)
Hog fuel	Medium–High	High	Low	Medium	Medium–High	2–4”	Quarries, landscape suppliers, some hauling co’s.	Medium	\$7–10/ cubic yard	\$0.58–0.83
Wood chips w/ greens ²	Medium–High	High	Medium	Variable	Medium	2–4”	Arborists, other tree services	Medium	Cheap or free	n/a
Straw	Medium	Low–Medium ⁴	Low	High	Low	2–4” ⁵	Feed stores, farm supply	Low	\$5/2–string bale	\$0.11 (3” deep)
Composted yard waste ³	High	Medium	High	Medium	Low	2–4”	City or county composting programs, landscape suppliers ¹	Medium–High	\$22–30/ cubic yard	\$1.83–2.50 (3” deep)
Weed cloth (plastic) ⁶	Medium	Highest	None	High	High	n/a	Wholesale and on-line distributors	Medium	\$0.80–1.00/ sq. yard	\$0.80–1.00
Geotextiles	Highest	Medium–High	None	High	High	n/a	Wholesale and on-line distributors	High	\$0.90–2.50/ sq. yard	\$0.90–2.50

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¹ Usually available through hauling companies ² Allow freshly chipped wood to sit for four weeks before applying

³ If mushroom compost or biosolids are used instead, have these materials lab tested for the presence of pesticide residues or heavy metals

⁴ While straw does offer some weed suppression, it usually also has weed seeds (mostly grasses) that may germinate at the site

⁵ Straw application rate for 2” deep is 2–3 tons/acre, for 4” deep it’s 4–6 tons/acre. One 2-string bale weighs 60–70 lbs.

⁶ Weed cloth must be removed once plants are established—it may hinder rhizome and stolon growth and will take decades to break down

