

Mulching

Course Description

Mulching is a simple but powerful practice that supports healthy plants, improves soil, and enhances the look of garden spaces. This course introduces best practices for mulching in public gardens, including when and how to apply it, how to choose the right materials, and how to avoid common mistakes like volcano mulching. You'll also explore how to balance aesthetics, maintenance, and sustainability when making mulch decisions in a variety of horticultural settings.

Learning Objectives

After taking this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain the primary functions and benefits of mulch, including moisture retention, temperature regulation, weed suppression, soil improvement, erosion control, and visual enhancement.
2. Compare different types of common mulch materials (e.g. arborist chips, leaf mulch, compost, pine straw, and living mulches), evaluating their horticultural properties, aesthetic appeal, environmental impact, and appropriate uses in various garden contexts.
3. Apply proper mulching techniques for trees, shrubs, and planting beds, including correct depth, spacing, and timing to promote plant health and longevity.
4. Recognize and avoid a range of harmful mulching practices, such as volcano mulching, and explain the negative effects these can have on plant and soil health.
5. Identify potential drawbacks of mulching, such as pest issues, nutrient imbalances, fire-hazards and describe strategies to prevent or mitigate these problems.
6. Apply sustainable and locally appropriate mulching practices, including sourcing decisions, use of recycled or onsite materials, and consideration of long-term ecological impact.
7. Aligning mulching activities with aesthetic goals and maintenance realities in mulch selection and placement, ensuring a balance between visitor-readiness and long-term plant health.