



Description and Purpose

Wood mulching consists of applying a mixture of shredded wood mulch or bark to disturbed soils. The primary function of wood mulching is to reduce erosion by protecting bare soil from rainfall impact, increasing infiltration, and reducing runoff.

Suitable Applications

Wood mulching is suitable for disturbed soil areas requiring temporary protection until permanent stabilization is established. Wood mulch may also be used for final stabilization; generally, used in a landscape setting or areas that will have pedestrian traffic.

Limitations

- Best suited to flat areas or gentle slopes or 5:1 (H:V) or flatter. Not suitable for use on slopes steeper than 3:1 (H:V). For slopes steeper than 3:1, consider the use of Compost Blankets (EC-14).
- Wood mulch may introduce unwanted species if it contains seed, although it may also be used to prevent weed growth if it is seed-free.
- Not suitable for areas exposed to concentrated flows.
- If used for temporary stabilization, wood mulch may need to be removed prior to further earthwork.

Categories

EC	Erosion Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SE	Sediment Control	
TC	Tracking Control	
WE	Wind Erosion Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NS	Non-Stormwater Management Control	
WM	Waste Management and Materials Pollution Control	

Legend:

- Primary Objective
- Secondary Objective

Targeted Constituents

Sediment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nutrients	
Trash	
Metals	
Bacteria	
Oil and Grease	
Organics	

Potential Alternatives

- EC-3 Hydraulic Mulch
- EC-4 Hydroseeding
- EC-5 Soil Binders
- EC-6 Straw Mulch
- EC-7 Geotextiles and Mats

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Implementation

Mulch Selection

There are many types of mulches. Selection of the appropriate type of mulch should be based on the type of application, site conditions, and compatibility with planned or future uses.

Application Procedures

Prior to application, after existing vegetation has been removed, roughen embankment and fill areas by rolling with a device such as a punching type roller or by track walking. The construction application procedures for mulches vary significantly depending upon the type of mulching method specified. Two methods are highlighted here:

- **Green Material:** This type of mulch is produced by the recycling of vegetation trimmings such as grass, shredded shrubs, and trees. Chipped brush from on-site vegetation clearing activities may be used (this may require stockpiling and reapplying after earthwork is complete). Methods of application are generally by hand although pneumatic methods are available.
 - Green material can be used as a temporary ground cover with or without seeding.
 - The green material should be evenly distributed on site to a depth of not more than 2 in.
- **Shredded Wood:** Suitable for ground cover in ornamental or revegetated plantings.
 - Shredded wood/bark is conditionally suitable. See note under limitations.
 - Distribute by hand or use pneumatic methods.
 - Evenly distribute the mulch across the soil surface to a depth of 2 to 3 in.
- Avoid mulch placement onto roads, sidewalks, drainage channels, existing vegetation, etc.

Costs

Assuming a 2-in. layer of wholesale landscaping-grade wood mulch, the average one-time cost for installation may range from \$15,000 – \$23,000 per acre¹. Costs can increase if the source is not close to the project site.

Inspection and Maintenance

- Inspect BMPs in accordance with General Permit requirements for the associated project type and risk level. It is recommended that at a minimum, BMPs be inspected weekly, prior to forecasted rain events, daily during extended rain events, and after the conclusion of rain events.
- Areas where erosion is evident shall be repaired and BMPs reapplied as soon as possible. Care should be exercised to minimize the damage to protected areas while making repairs, as any area damaged will require reapplication of BMPs.

¹ Costs based on estimates provided by the California Department of Transportation's *Soil Stabilization BMP Research for Erosion and Sediment Controls Cost Survey Technical Memorandum*, CTSW-TM-07-172.35.1, July 2007 (available at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_la_design/guidance/estimating/Soil_Stabilization_Pricing.pdf) and adjusted for inflation from 1997 to 2016.

- Regardless of the mulching technique selected, the key consideration in inspection and maintenance is that the mulch needs to last long enough to achieve erosion control objectives. If the mulch is applied as a stand-alone erosion control method over disturbed areas (without seed), it should last the length of time the site will remain barren or until final re-grading and revegetation.
- Where vegetation is not the ultimate cover, such as ornamental and landscape applications of bark or wood chips, inspection and maintenance should focus on longevity and integrity of the mulch.
- Reapply mulch when bare earth becomes visible.

References

Controlling Erosion of Construction Sites Agriculture Information Bulletin #347, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly Soil Conservation Service – SCS).

Guides for Erosion and Sediment Control in California, USDA Soils Conservation Service, January 1991.

Manual of Standards of Erosion and Sediment Control Measures, Association of Bay Area Governments, May 1995.

Proposed Guidance Specifying Management Measures for Sources of Nonpoint Pollution in Coastal Waters, Work Group Working Paper, USEPA, April 1992.

Sedimentation and Erosion Control, An Inventory of Current Practices Draft, U.S. EPA, April 1990.

Soil Erosion by Water Agricultural Information Bulletin #513, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service.

Soil Stabilization BMP Research for Erosion and Sediment Controls Cost Survey Technical Memorandum, CTSW-TM-07-172.35.1, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), July 2007. Available online at:

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Stormwater Quality Handbooks Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs) Manual, State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), November 2000.

Water Quality Management Plan for the Lake Tahoe Region, Volume II, Handbook of Management Practices, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, November 1988.