United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Mulching (484)

Mulching is applying a protective cover of plant residues or other suitable material not produced on the site, to the soil surface.

Practice Information

Mulching is used to help control soil erosion, protect crops, conserve moisture, moderate soil temperature, prevent soil compaction and crusting, reduce runoff, and suppress growth of weeds. The practice is used on sites subject to erosion and high runoff rates that need the additional protection from material brought in from off the site. The material may be manufactured and commercially available or it may be hay or crop residues hauled to the site and applied. Selection of materials is dependent upon site condition and the availability of materials.

This practice is used primarily on construction sites. However, the practice is often used in production of specialty crops including grapes, other fruits, and vegetables.

Common Associated Practices

Mulching (484) is commonly applied with conservation practices associated with a new vegetative seeding such as Critical Area Planting (342) and Diversion (362).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.