

MULCHING JOB SHEET



Black Plastic on Raised Beds

What is it?

Mulching, as defined by this conservation practice, is applying plant residues or other suitable material, not produced on the site, to the soil surface. The wording “not produced on the site” means that mowing down plants and leaving the residue in place prior to planting a crop is not considered mulching for this conservation practice. Materials such as grain straw or hay, wood chips, etc., produced on the same farming operation and transported to the application site are considered mulch.

Mulching can be used for many conservation related purposes. These include conserving soil moisture, reducing the energy use associated with irrigation, moderating (e.g., cooling or warming) the soil temperature, erosion control, weed suppression, aiding the establishment of vegetative cover, improve the soil quality (e.g., tilth, organic matter, etc.), and reduce airborne particulates.

This conservation practice can be used on all on all types of agricultural systems or land uses where mulching is needed. Examples would be crop and vegetable production, groves, vineyards, container nursery beds, construction sites, etc.

General Planning Information

Many types of material can be used for mulch as long as the material can be applied in a deep enough layer and remain on the soil surface long enough to do the job they are being applied for. For example, in the above photo, the black plastic mulch needs to be of sufficient quality to remain in place on the raised beds without tearing during the cropping season.

Some of the different types of materials that can be used for mulch include hay or straw, wood bark or chips, gravel, fabric or plastic sheeting, or other types of natural or artificial materials. When using natural mulch material it is essential that they are relatively free of disease, pesticides, chemicals, and weed seed.

Generally all site preparation such as bedding, installation of subsurface irrigation, etc., needs to be done prior to mulch application. For all uses, even distribution of the mulch material across the soil surface is necessary for the mulch to be effective. Recommended surface coverage is dependent upon conservation purpose the mulch is

MULCHING JOB SHEET

being used for. Additionally some types of mulch may require some type of anchoring system. See the mulching site specific portion of this job sheet on the following pages for what is necessary for your specific purpose.

Operation and Maintenance

Producers need to periodically inspect their mulched areas and reinstall or repair the mulch as needed to ensure it is accomplishing its purpose. Care should be taken when operating equipment near or on mulched sites to ensure that the mulch is not damaged. Additionally, fire damage to the mulch material should be prevented when possible, and when not possible, fire damage should be repaired as soon as possible. All mulch sites should be monitored for weed infestation, and weeds controlled by Univ. of Florida recommended practices. Removal or incorporation of mulch should be consistent with the purpose for which the mulch was used and the site conditions. All artificial mulches should be collected after removal and properly disposed of.

MULCHING - SITE SPECIFIC JOB SHEET

Land User:		County:	Date:
Farm #:	Tract #:	Field # (s):	
Purpose (check all that apply)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Conserve soil moisture	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce energy use associated with irrigation		
<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate soil temperature	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide erosion control		
<input type="checkbox"/> Suppress weed growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate the establishment of vegetative cover		
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve soil quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce airborne particulates		
Type of mulch			
Planned		Applied	
Percent cover and/or thickness			
Planned		Applied	
Timing of application			
Planned		Applied	
Site Preparation			
Planned		Applied	
Anchoring Materials and/or Methods			
Planned		Applied	

MULCHING - SITE SPECIFIC JOB SHEET

Operation and Maintenance

--

Additional Specifications and Notes:

--

This practice is planned according to NRCS Standards and Specifications.

Conservationist:	Date:
-------------------------	--------------

I agree to install this practice as explained in the above Job Sheet.

Client:	Date:
----------------	--------------

This practice has been completed and maintained in accordance with this Job Sheet.

Certified By:	Date:
----------------------	--------------