

# Arborist Wood Chips

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I use a lot of arborist wood chips! They are one of the best mulches for trees and shrubs. They have been very effective in establishing new habitats for native plants. They cover my vegetable garden paths. Wood chips have greatly helped improve soils everywhere I've used them.

So what are arborist wood chips? Unlike commercial mulches, which are uniform in size and material, wood chips include bark, wood, and leaves or needles from freshly cut or pruned trees. Wood chips are slow decomposers, breaking down to compost and adding nutrients over long periods. They resist compaction and retain moisture better than commercial bark mulches. Wood chips are a great help in controlling weeds. At a depth of 4-6", they suppress light and inhibit seed germination by robbing nitrogen between the mulch and soil layers. Research has shown wood chips applied to the surface will not drain nitrogen at the plant's root level where nutrients are taken up.

Another benefit is that most wood chips are free! If you see a neighbor having branches trimmed or a tree cut down, stop and ask the arborist if they can "drop" the wood chips in your yard. Nine times out of ten, they will be glad to deliver them and save a trip, and you will help keep plant materials out of landfills.

## Resources

Washington State University Extension:

<https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/Product/ProductDetails?productId=4265>