

Archive for June, 2010

Got Mulch?

Thursday, June 17th, 2010

Most urban tree planters know the value of mulch, especially around newly planted trees. The benefits of mulch are numerous, most prominent of which are: retention of soil moisture, weed and grass control, and protection of the stem and surface roots from mowers (the people, not the machines). Mulch provides a number of soil improvement benefits also, which helps to improve the growing environment for the tree. In many ways, mulch is a tree's best friend.

Now is a good time to check any mulched areas you have in your home landscape. Freshen them up if the depth of the mulch is lessening due to decomposition, or other factors. About 3 inches of bark or wood chips makes for a good mulch "pile" around your tree(s). Shape the mulch into a doughnut about 2-3 feet in diameter, leaving a small gap around the trunk. Don't mound mulch onto the trunk, which makes it look like a volcano. Mounding encourages girdling stem roots, which can weaken or even kill the tree. Black plastic, grass clippings, or sawdust should not be used as mulch. If any weeds pop up through the mulch, get rid of them until the mulch mats down and does the job on it's own.

Proper mulching can make maintenance around your tree(s) much easier, and helps them to grow their best under whatever circumstance exists at the planting site. Use it!

Add Trees = Added Value

Saturday, June 26th, 2010

Trees in the landscape provide a number of values, and the value that any one person sees depends on their point of view. However, a good argument can be made that the most important value of any tree is the ecoservices it provides. These are services we often take for granted such as taking carbon out of the air and replacing it with life-giving oxygen. Or sequestering carbon in its wood that would otherwise "wander" around in the environment doing harm to something somewhere. Or, less recognized, the ability to retain thousands of gallons of rain that would run off quickly after a storm, making it necessary to take drastic steps to prevent flooding (with more expense, too). Trees also remove hundreds of pounds of particulate matter from the air, and a variety of chemicals that are harmful to our health, and they shade tender skin from ultraviolet rays that can cause cancer later in life. The list goes on.

Sometimes the ecoservices benefits are difficult to see, and often escape our attention. One of the more tangible benefits that readily catches our attention is the value added to our property by the presence of trees, especially those that are the right species planted in the right places. There are several ways to economically use trees to increase your property value, in addition to assuring that you have the right tree in the right place:

1. Protect existing, desirable trees during construction.
2. Transplant trees from elsewhere on your property to the front lawn area or other spots where trees are fewer.
3. Plant seedlings on property now that is to be a building site in the future.
4. Strategically place a few larger trees from a nursery to enhance aesthetics or increase energy efficiency.
5. Encourage the planting of street trees in newly developed areas, and proper pruning in older trees.
6. Prune off any dead or dying branches in yard trees.

Keep in mind, through it all, however, RIGHT TREE, RIGHT PLACE !!!!