



PUBLIC WORKS

FIRST RESPONDER

TREES & US. DON'T GIVE YOUR TREES TRENCH FOOT. STOP OVER MULCHING.

Village of Niles Public Works & Illinois Arborist Association
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Trees are a lot like you and me. They need to breathe, eat and drink just like us. Trees benefit from companionship and can be just as sensitive to the sun, cold weather and wet weather.

TREES CAN GET TRENCH FOOT?

Ok, trees really don't get Trench Foot. But trees need to have a solid base to stand up on. Here's another way to think about it. The root flare on a tree is the foot and the trunk is its leg.



Ever heard of volcano mulching? This is a problem that is not only a Niles issue, but a global issue. Volcano Mulching is where mulch is piled high against the trunk of a tree. Tree trunks are not meant to be covered with

mulch. We need to keep their feet and legs dry. Photo courtesy of Google.

If you have ever heard of Trench Foot you will know it was an infection of the feet caused by cold, wet and insanitary conditions. Men stood in trenches without ever being able to dry their feet and legs. Trench foot killed an estimated 2,000 American and 75,000 British soldiers during WW1.

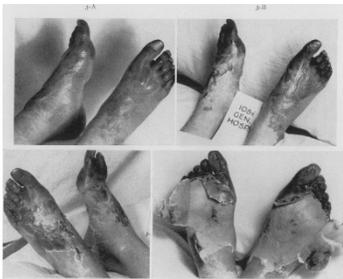


Photo courtesy of Google.



Photo courtesy of Google.

Volcano Mulching can cause the same issues as Trench Foot. Having mulch piled around its root flare

(Foot) or its trunk (Leg) will eventually lead to rot, disease and ultimately death. As you can see from the picture below, when the mulch is pulled back from the tree trunk, the trunk is wet, and the bark is discolored.



In many communities you see large beautiful bricks and high mulch around trees. Unfortunately, this is actually causing your trees undo harm and shortening its life. In rare cases, some

trees have defied the odds.

See photo to the right. If the tree trunk was your leg you would have wet mulch covering your foot and stopping just below your knee. This only has a negative impact on the tree.

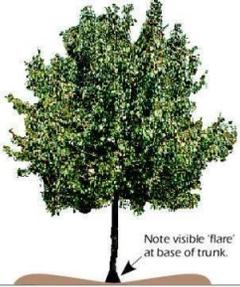


The goal of this article is purely educational. I want you to think about your next gardening project or possibly that of a family member. Remember less is better. Mulching trees helps keep down weeds eliminating competition for water.

Mulch Volcano - BAD



Proper Mulching



Here is a side by side comparison of improper and proper ways to mulch your trees.

APPLYING MULCH

“Spread mulch under trees, shrubs, and throughout planting beds to a recommended depth of 3-4 inches for medium to coarse textured materials.

Pull mulch away from the bases of tree and shrub trunks creating a donut-hole. Do not pile it up against the trunk (“volcano mulching”). Excessive mulch on the trunk causes moisture to build up, creating ideal conditions for insect pests, diseases, and decay.

Ideally, the mulched area around a tree should extend to the drip line of the branches, or at least cover a 4-5-foot diameter area around the trunk. The larger the mulched area, the more beneficial.

Check the mulch depth annually and replenish as necessary”. Morton Arboretum

Photo courtesy of Google / HomeGuide



This is the proper way to mulch your tree. Keep its feet & legs nice and dry. Your trees will thank you in the long run.

Photo courtesy of Google.



Soldiers in WW1 didn't have a choice. They had to deal with the environment they were thrown in to. Don't give your

trees Trench Foot. Give them the proper tools and chances to survive.

Trees are our neighborhood soldiers. Trees produce oxygen, shade, cool our homes and give



animals a place to live. Tree lined streets have a narrowing effect on the roadway which slows down vehicles keeping us all safe. For everything trees

do for us the easiest thing we can do for them is to not over mulch.

For more information on what you can do for trees in your neighborhood, please contact a local Arborist. The Village of Niles Public Works Department has three Arborists on staff. Please call 847-588-7900

<https://www.vniles.com/153/Forestry>

You can also reach out to the Illinois Arborist Association <http://illinoisarborist.org/services-we-provide/resources-for-municipal-arborists/>

The Morton Arboretum is also a great resource for all your plant and tree questions.

<https://www.mortonarb.org/>