Garden Wisdom

By Donna McMaster

I would like to talk to you a little about mulching your garden. I have a couple of hints that you might not have thought about.

We mulch our flower gardens for a number of reasons. Perhaps you might just like the fact that the whole garden looks neater with a good mulch in the spring, and that is true, it does look better.

One very important factor is that an organic mulch that breaks down improves the soil by adding nutrients. Using compost or triple mix or well rotted manure are the best choices, because they add the most organic matter to the soil, but shredded bark is very popular and looks good. Personally I don't like red, because I think your garden should look natural and red mulch just doesn't do it for me, but that's just me.

Another reason we mulch is to retain moisture in the soil. A nice inch or two of shredded bark will accomplish this, but always try to do it just after a rain when the soil is moist. If you lay a mulch when the ground is dry, it won't be as effective.

Keeping the weeds from germinating in the spring is an excellent reason to use a mulch and it does help, especially if you get it spread early in the season.

One last comment about mulch or top dressing; I do not recommend peat moss, because rarely do I see anyone using it properly. If you use it for anything, you must moisten it first. Don't ever put dry peat in your garden or on your lawn. If you put it on your lawn, it will prevent the water from penetrating rather than keeping the moisture in. If you doubt this, just try to moisten a pail of peat moss. Fill a bucket half full of peat and try to dampen it completely: you will not believe how long it takes. I am talking days here, not hours. Covering your lawn or flower beds with peat is like using a sponge to suck the water out of the soil. Moistened peat mixed into your soil will help to retain moisture, but dry peat totally defeats your purpose.

Thanks to all who supported our plant sale this year. We had a beautiful day and all the best plants sold out early. Next year come sooner.

The next meeting of the Stouffville Garden Club will be at Latcham Hall on June 15 at 7:30 p.m. and our guest will be James Graham, speaking about old fashioned favourites. We welcome you to join us.

Happy gardening!

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