

Mulch cuts down on weeding and watering

Grabbing a shovel, rolling out the wheelbarrow and digging into a mile-high pile of mulch can put gardeners into avoidance mode, but the effort pays off with less labor for the rest of the season.

"It really does reduce your work load," said Linda Brewer, a senior research assistant in Oregon State University's department of horticulture. "Once applied it cuts down on weeding and watering."

Weed seeds struggle to push through mulch, which means fewer of them germinate. Those that do are easier to yank out of the looser-than-soil layer piled over them. Keep in mind, though, that mulch discourages any type of seed, including those of self-sowing plants you may want growing in the garden like *Verbena bonariensis*, California poppy, columbine, bachelor's button, calendula, alyssum and viola.

During warm weather, soil under cover of mulch stays cooler and retains moisture longer than uncovered ground, which reduces the need for watering, noted Brewer, who is a certified soil scientist. In winter, the same covering helps prevent frost damage.

"In winter, heat that rises off the soil is held in place," she said. "It's the same as when we sleep under a blanket in an unheated house. During the summer, it's like insulation that keeps the heat out."

Add to its other benefits that mulch aids in erosion control, reduces compaction from rain and foot traffic and releases nutrients. Not all mulches are created equal when it comes to the amount of nutrients available or how quickly they break down. Compost is quickest to decompose and one of the most nutrient-rich, said Brewer, who urges homeowners to use it.



KYM POKORNY
Your Garden

"If we expect the cart to go away every week, it behooves us to purchase compost to keep the cycle going," she said. "Compost won't smother weed seeds as well, though, because it's a great growing medium."

To help with that, no matter the type of mulch, put down five to 10 layers of newspaper before spreading the mulch. The newspaper lasts longer than you may think, said Brewer, who used it under wood chips over a weedy lawn. Seven years later, she dug down and found the newspaper still intact. Landscape fabric or plastic would do the same.

"From my point of view, the best mulch is one we don't pay very much for," she said.

An example of that is mint compost from local farmers, usually available in August and a good source of nutrients. An easier option for urban homeowners are the wood chips generated by tree pruning or removal. Catch them as you drive around the neighborhood or call a few companies to see if they sell to the public and how much they charge.

When applying mulch, how much depends on which type you're using. Spread finer-textured products such as yard debris compost or mint compost 1 to 1½ inches deep. Coarser wood products such as bark dust, wood chips and arborist waste can be as deep as 3 inches. Keep any material at least 2 inches away from the base of trees, shrubs and woody perennials.

To help you choose a mulch, Brewer discussed



Photo from Flickr by Eric Martin

Bark nuggets provide good weed control and last a long time.

some pros and cons.

BARK DUST

Pro: Cheap. Easily available. Comes in several colors. Good weed control.

Con: Ties up nitrogen in the soil so not good for plants that aren't established.

WOOD CHIPS

Pro: Easily available. Lasts a long time. Good weed control.

Con: Ties up nitrogen in the soil so not good for plants that aren't established.

BARK NUGGETS

Pro: Attractive appearance and easily available. Lasts a long time. Good weed control.

Con: Expensive. Ties up nitrogen in the soil so not good for plants that aren't established.

YARD WASTE COMPOST

Pro: Good source of nutrients. Locally produced.

Con: Can promote weed growth. Doesn't last long so must be refreshed each year.

TREE LEAVES

Pro: Free and easily available. Good source of nutrients.

Con: Not easy to spread to a consistent thickness. Must

be mowed or turned to get it to break down in a season.

ARBORIST MULCH

Pro: Cheap and easily available.

Con: Not consistent in size or appearance. Low in nutrients.

MINT COMPOST

Pro: Locally produced material. Good source of nutrients. Smells good. Nice silver-gray color when dry.

Con: Only seasonally available.

SAWDUST

Pro: Good for vegetable paths. Holds down weeds well.

Con: Repels moisture because it's so fine. Fresh sawdust shouldn't be used on bedding plants.

HAZELNUTS

Pro: Nice appearance and sound when walked on. Durable.

Con: Hard to walk on barefoot. Not good for slopes. Expensive because most often found in bags rather than bulk. Only seasonally available.

For more information about mulches, refer to the Extension publication *Mulching Woody Ornamentals with Organic Materials*.

BIRTHS

Anderson

Amelia Rose Anderson was born on June 15 to Taylor Demetroff and Warren Anderson, both of Independence, at Salem Family Birth Center. She weighed 7 pounds, 7 ounces. Grandparents are Sherry and Pete, of Independence.

Common Sense Tip **FOR PEDESTRIANS**

LOOK LEFT. RIGHT. LEFT.

Things change fast, so follow these simple steps to make sure the coast is clear before crossing any street. And walk on!

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Polk County Itemizer-Observer

MI TOWN



PATTY TAYLOR DUTCHER
Columnist

There's nothing like a good, long walk on the beach — or a hike in the woods — or just taking the time to relax in a quiet place to help refresh mind and body and gain some perspective on how to cope with everything that is going on around us. Rested and refreshed, we can hopefully set aside the fears that seem to be consuming so many of us, and be ready to handle our own personal challenges and fears.

It seems like we've been listening to political rhetoric for months and months ... and the elections aren't until November. In the meantime, the words get more heated and hostile, accusations fly back and forth, myth and folklore abound — both on the internet and in conversations in coffee shops and

around dining room tables. Discussion is good, and learning about the issues and the candidates gives us an opportunity to make wise and informed decisions before making our choices. In the meantime, it's difficult to listen to messages of hate and fear and strident conversations. Often it's good to either change the subject or excuse one's self from the discussion.

The recent horrible tragedy in Orlando, Fla., only serves to bring up more heated discussions and con-

versations about religion, immigration, sexual orientation and the availability of guns — any of which can bring out points and counterpoints and endless hours of arguments on both sides. Most of us have made up our minds on all of those subjects, but we can agree to respectfully listen and choose to agree or disagree without being disrespectful or mean spirited.

In the meantime, let's all try to do something that can make a positive difference to others. Volunteer at our libraries, help out at the food bank, read to somebody in a nursing home, or just smile to people in line at the grocery store. There are many things we can do to chase away the doom and gloom, and bring sunshine into somebody else's world.

I'd like to wish a very happy 50th wedding anniversary to friends, Dale and Jeanne Cannon, who have been MI Town residents for many years, and members of our yoga group at the Monmouth Senior Center.

I'd also like to congratulate granddaughter, Nicole Lukinbeal, who will be a senior at Scappoose High School in September. Nicole was recently chosen to be the first team for all-state for softball for her division. We've spent many afternoons and evenings watching kids and grandkids' sports events, and enjoyed basketball, soccer, track, baseball and crew over the years, and can't say enough good things about sports for kids — of all ages.

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Matinees are all shows before 6pm. New pricing for matinees are: Adult \$7.25 Children \$6.75 • Senior \$7.00 Pricing does not reflect 3D showings.

Friday - Wednesday June 24 - June 29

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS (Digital) (PG13)	(1:25)	
WARCRAFT (Digital) (PG13)	(4:00)	6:45
XMEN: APOCALYPSE (Digital) (PG13)		9:25
FREE STATE OF JONES (Digital) (R)	(12:30 3:35)	6:40 9:45
INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE (Digital) (PG13)	(1:40 4:25)	6:30 7:15 9:15 10:00
FINDING DORY (Digital) (PG)	(11:30 1:15 2:00 3:45 4:30)	7:00 9:30
THE SHALLOWS (Digital) (PG13)	(1:00 3:10 5:20)	7:30 9:35
THE CONJURING 2 (Digital) (R)	(12:50 3:50)	6:50 9:40
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE (PG13)	(11:25 2:00 4:40)	7:20 10:00

Thursday June 30

FREE STATE OF JONES (Digital) (R)	(12:30 3:35)	6:40 9:45
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS (Digital) (PG13)	(1:25)	
WARCRAFT (Digital) (PG13)	(4:00)	
PURGE: ELECTION YEAR (Digital) (R)		7:05 9:30
INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE (Digital) (PG13)	(1:40 4:25)	7:15 10:00
FINDING DORY (Digital) (PG)	(11:30 1:15 2:00 3:45 4:30)	7:00 9:30
LEGEND OF TARZAN (Digital) (PG13)		6:00 8:30
THE SHALLOWS (Digital) (PG13)	(1:00 3:10 5:20)	7:30 9:35
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE (PG13)	(11:25 2:00 4:40)	7:20 10:00
THE CONJURING 2 (Digital) (R)	(12:50 3:50)	
THE BFG (Digital) (PG)		7:00 9:40

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Early Deadlines!

Our office will be closed Monday, July 4th 2016 in observance of Independence Day.

Deadlines:

- Community Events . . . Thursday Noon
- Legals . . . Thursday Noon
- Display Ads . . . Thursday 2 pm
- Letters to Editor . . . Friday 10 am
- Classified Display . . . Friday 11 am
- Classified Line Ads . . . Friday Noon
- Obituaries . . . Friday Noon

HAPPY 4th OF JULY

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