

PRINCIPLES OF EASY CARE GARDENING

Easy Care Gardening is the art and science of obtaining the most pleasure from gardens/ gardening with the least amount of work.

Mulch wherever possible

- Make garden edges deep and well defined. This makes weeding along edges much easier and lawn maintenance easier to manage. Consider edging with bricks or wood
- Change lawns to mulch or ground cover such as *dichondra*, chamomile or thyme
- Put in a simple watering system
- Plant perennials and ground covers to prevent weeds. Planting ground covers help to prevent weed growth and hold soil, particularly on sloping ground. They can readily be planted in mulched areas. Move or cut the newspaper with a spade to provide an area large enough so that any wet paper does not touch the trunk of the plant.
- Give gardens a good deep soak less frequently rather than frequent, short watering
- Minimal pot plants, especially small ones
- Minimal use of fertilizers & pesticides
- Plant carefully chosen Easy Care plants (see details below for *Easy Care plants*)
- *Ring Mulch* around trees and shrubs (see details below for *ring mulching*)

REASONS FOR MULCHING

- Prevents weed growth
- Holds in moisture
- Prevents soil erosion
- Adds nutrients to the soil as it breaks down

The easy way to mulch

- Clear weeds
- Cover the whole area with thick layers of newspaper (overlap well) – newspapers should be at least 10 sheets thick. Soak the newspaper as you go to prevent it blowing around
- Cover with mulch

Material suitable for mulching include

- A commercial mulch obtained from the local nursery or landscape supplier
- Leaf litter(not camphor laurel)
- Lucerne hay/straw which can be obtained from nurseries or produce stores.
- Many councils will provide you with some free mulch for your gardens. You will need to go and pick it up

Ring Mulching

Ring mulching refers to mulching circularly around the base of shrubs and tree. As with the mulching described above lay thick layers of overlapping wet newspaper under the mulch to slow weed/grass growth.

- The larger the area mulched around a tree, the greater the benefit. The size of the area to be mulched is generally reflected by the size of the tree. By allowing for the average root system of a tree to extend up to 3-4 times the area of the drip line, suggests that the larger the area being mulched the greater the benefit. However the minimum recommended size of the area to be mulched can be summarized for small trees (up to 7m high) as 1m radius, medium sized trees (8-15m high) 2m radius and large trees (greater than 16m); 3m radius, see Figure 1.

- Make a buffer zone between the tree trunk and the mulch to prevent too much moisture from causing mold growth and causing fungal infections at the base of the tree. At least 6 inches of mulch-free space around the trunk is advisable, see Figure 1.

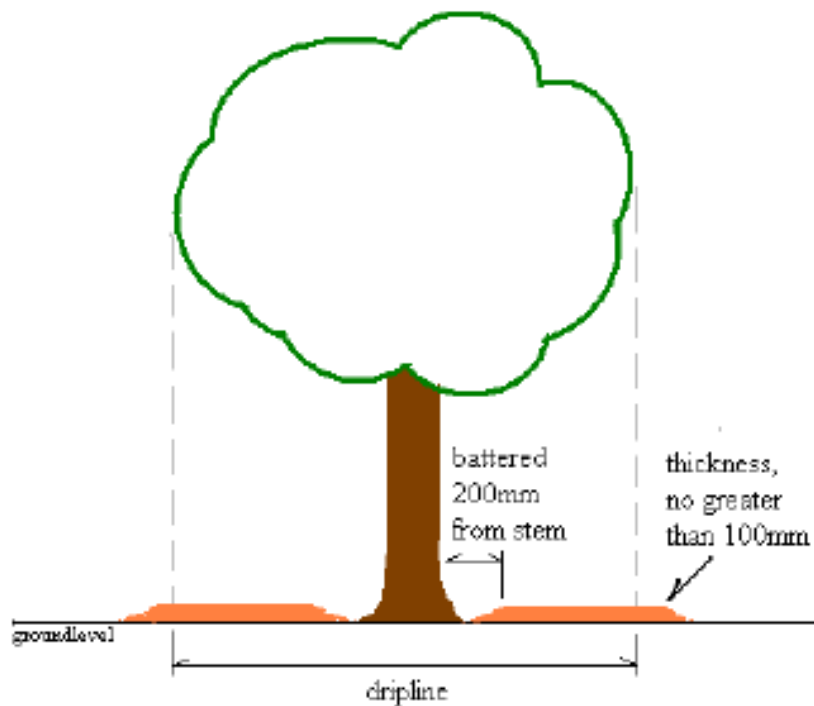


Figure 1 – Example of Ring Mulching around tree. Suitable for trees and shrubs

WHAT IS AN EASY CARE PLANT?

An Easy Care plant should have the following characteristics:

- Is naturally hardy
- Is long lived (perennial)
- Needs pruning infrequently
- Needs little fertilizer
- Needs little water
- Is not invasive

Garden Care at Canterbury City Community Centre can provide you with a list of Easy Care plants suitable for your area

POT PLANTS

Pot plants require extra watering, therefore it is a good idea to consider removing plants from pots where possible and place them in the garden.

TOOLS AND BACK CARE:

- Use long handled tools to prevent bending
- Use an easy-knee stool which can be purchased from most hardware/gardening stores
- Be mindful lifting. Remember to bend your knees and keep your back straight
- Don't work too long on one job without a break

And, ENJOY!!

Finally, if you would like more detailed advice on how best to create and maintain an Easy Care Garden please contact Garden Care at Canterbury City Community Centre on 9750 9344.