mulch materials

Mulches are a layer of organic material placed around plants to inhibit weed growth, minimize soil erosion and runoff, reduce watering needs by keeping soils moist, and define areas. Several of the same materials useful for paths (such as wood chips and nutshells) make good mulches, as well. While mulch is a landscape material, and therefore included in this guide, it's as important to use mulch correctly as it is to identify the type you'll use. The type of plants you're mulching determine the best material for the job. For tips on when, where, how, and how much to mulch, refer to the Growing Healthy Soil guide; see Resources on page 20 for details.

mulch choices

MATERIAL **DESCRIPTION/TIPS BENEFITS DRAWBACKS** Compost Yard waste and other organic materials decompose to create a dark, recycled content weeds germinate more readily than

crumbly, earthy material. After used as mulch, compost can be worked into the soil to feed and enhance plants and soil life.

Tips: Make your own compost at home (see Resources on page XX), or purchase from local suppliers.

Fall leaves make excellent mulch, decomposing quickly; a free annual supply is guaranteed.

Tips: Shred leaves with a mower, or use them whole. Evergreen leaves take longer to decompose; some leaves, such as Rhododendron, are poisonous.

improve soil quality

improve soil quality

can be produced on

site, or ordered from local suppliers

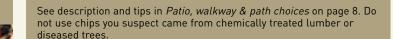
reduce winter soil

insulate plant roots from cold

if left whole, may blow around

in finer textured mulches

Wood Chips



natural look

low cost

may spread weeds and disease

Nutshells



See description and tips in Patio, walkway & path choices on page 8.

natural look

low cost

hard on bare feet

Compost: More Than Just Mulch

Adding compost when preparing garden, lawn, or plant bed soil encourages healthy plant growth while reducing your landscape's water, fertilizer and pesticide needs. The general rule is to incorporate between one and three inches of compost into the upper eight inches of soil. For information on soil testing, solving soil problems, or finding a compost supplier, see the Growing Healthy Soil guide at www.seattle.gov/util (click on Yard, then Natural Lawn & Garden Care) or call the Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline at (206) 633-0224.