



ROCKS VS. MULCH–WHICH IS BETTER IN FLOWER BEDS AND AROUND TREES?

PROS AND CONS OF *ORGANIC* MULCH

PROS

- **Better Growth:** Mulch reduces weed competition, moderates soil temperatures, prevents soil drying and enables faster plant growth and establishment
- **Less Water:** Mulch reduces water evaporation, so you spend less time and money watering!
- **More Nutrients and organic matter:** As mulch breaks down, it adds nutrients and organic matter that plants need to thrive.
- **Fewer Weeds:** Mulch stops sunlight from reaching the soil so that less weed seeds will germinate.
- **Just the Right Temperature:** Mulch keeps plants warm in the winter and cool in the summer.
- **Reduce Compaction and Erosion:** Mulch reduces soil erosion by up to 85 percent. Plus, people are less likely to walk on mulch, so there's less soil compaction.

CONS

- **Annual Replacement:** Depending on your mulch type, you'll have to replace it every one to four years. So, it's a recurring cost and time expense.
- **Too Much of a Good Thing:** Adding a layer of mulch more than 2-3 inches can result in plant stress due to reduction in oxygen or water infiltration for plant roots.
- **Too Early = Late Blooms:** Mulching too early may slow how quickly the ground warms, which means you could see blooms a bit later than normal.
- **Too Late = Weeds:** Mulch stops weeds from germinating. If you mulch too late, it may not stop them as much.
- **Weed Seeds:** Some organic mulches, like pine bark and hay, may contain weed seeds.

PROS AND CONS OF *ROCKS* IN THE GARDEN

PROS

- **Low Maintenance:** You almost never need to replace them.
- **Lower Cost:** Because they're longer lasting, it is generally less expensive over the long term to mulch with rocks.
- **Fire-Proof:** If you live in an area with wildfires, rocks could be better since they're nonflammable.
- **Wind-Resistant:** Heavy rocks are great at preventing soil erosion in windy areas.
- **Perfect for Rock and Cacti Gardens:** Rocks are just right for these garden spaces!

CONS

- **Too Hot:** Rocks raise the soil temperature, leading to stressed, thirsty plants.
- **No Benefit to Plants:** Rocks don't aid plant growth or soil health.
- **Return of the Weeds:** Wind will eventually blow soil between rocks, creating a spot for weeds to grow.
- **No Good for Pruning:** Rocks can prohibit or make rejuvenation pruning more difficult.
- **Remove by Hand:** If you want to remove stones, you must do it manually, which can be tedious!

VERDICT: ORGANIC MULCH /S OVERALL BETTER THAN STONE. BUT STONE IS BETTER THAN NO MULCH AT ALL!