

Summer 2023

Fresh Wood Chips Make Great Mulch

The Camden Park Landscaping Committee has been applying fresh wood chip mulch to common area trees on some of our streets in East and West Camden and Caldwell Square. Here's why.

By Travis Black, Bartlett Tree Experts

Applying mulch is one of the best arboricultural practices available to improve tree and shrub health, and one of the most economical kinds of mulch is fresh wood chips produced by tree pruning.

Mulches provide many benefits, including moderating soil temperatures, reducing soil moisture loss, reducing soil compaction, providing nutrients, reducing weed competition, and improving soil structure. These soil factors result in more efficient root growth and healthier plants.

Mulch also keeps mowers and string trimmers away from the trunk of the tree, preventing one of the most common forms of mechanical damage to young trees.

Fresh wood chips are a mixture of wood, bark, and leaves - a highly desirable mix because of its carbon: nitrogen ratio, which is lower than pure wood-based mulches.

Arborist's Corner

*By [Travis Black](#)
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[Bartlett Tree Experts](#) has been managing the Camden Park urban forest since 2007 and is responsible for maintaining trees in our common areas including our five squares.

This is the first in a series of articles that we'll be including in the *Camden Park News & Views*.

We'll also archive the articles on the [Camden Park web page](#) for easy reference.

About Travis Black:

A native North Carolinian, Travis Black has worked with Bartlett since 2014.

He holds a BS in Landscape Design and a Masters in Horticulture Science in Urban Forestry from NC State University.

He is a member of the [NC Urban Forest Council](#), which advocates for the sustainability of urban forests in our communities.



Mulch should never be piled against the trunk of a tree or a plant.

Mulch should be applied starting near the base of the tree to the drip line - the width of tree canopy.

If space is limited, the width of the mulch

bed should be as large as possible. Near the trunk, mulch should taper down to a very thin layer.

The optimum depth of mulch is two to four inches. This thickness will greatly reduce the growth of weeds and will not allow the buildup of heat from leaf decomposition.

Turf does not need to be killed or removed before mulch is applied because the correct layer of mulch will kill any turf grass.

Neither is it necessary to put down a fabric barrier before applying mulch. Fabric barriers interfere with the breakdown of mulch and may girdle tree trunks and affect water movement into the soil.

Last year, Camden Park volunteers spread fresh wood chips supplied by Bartlett Tree Experts along the willow oaks of East Camden as well as the natural areas of Caldwell Square.

