

THE FOLLOWING IS EXCERPTED FROM:

Managing Invasive Plants at Home: Resource List

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Updated 12/27/22. Kindly contact Kathy@SpeakingofLandscapes.com regarding reproduction.

Wood Chips for Site Preparation: The chips created after tree removals are excellent site-clearing material. These chips are rough cut and include all parts of the tree. Pile them 12" deep or more over the intended removal area. (Depth is key! This is not the same as mulching with decorative bark materials.) Before placing the chips, you must mow or brush-cut the intended area as low to the ground as possible. Rake away the cuttings. (Or use a bagger on the mower.)

Chips smother both established plants and young seedlings very effectively, mostly by robbing them of light. They also create a small nitrogen deficit in the top two to three inches of soil, which deprives freshly germinated seeds of a critical nutrient. The effectiveness of this method is directly related to the depth of the chips and the length of time they are allowed to rest over the intended clearing. After one to two years with a chip cover, some supplemental weed removal may be required. Undecomposed wood chips must be removed from the surface before reseeding the area or planting small seedlings.

Additional notes on the use of wood chips for site clearing:

- *Note 1:* Wood chips are not the same as bark mulch or other forms of landscape mulch. Bark mulch decays quickly and uniformly compared to wood chips. Bark mulch tends to repel moisture. Deep bark mulch is likely to create dry zones under the soil surface. Wood chips, on the other hand, decompose more slowly. Most of the chips in a typical pile are wood—with comparatively little bark. Wood is "hydrophilic," attracting and holding moisture for longer times. Water infiltration and gas exchange are unimpeded.
- *Note 2:* You can sign up online for free chip delivery with <https://getchipdrop.com/>. Supplies are not guaranteed, but it is worth listing your request. The site also has an extensive discussion of this material, including its "Wood Chips 101" page: <https://getchipdrop.com/woodchips/>.
- *Note 3:* Word of caution about invasive jumping worms: These destructive worms are well established in southern New England. Eggs can travel with chips that lay on the ground. According to Annise Dobson, Ph.D., Yale School of Forestry, try to use chips directly from a take-down. (They have not been stored on the ground.) If the chips are stockpiled and rest on the ground, they may be pick up worms or eggs. If using stored

chips, allow the pile to compost for three days at 105 degrees or higher and turn it. To get the latest on jumping worm solutions, visit ct.gov/CAES and use the search bar to search for the topic: "jumping worms."

- *Note 4: Timing:* Woodchip or woodchip/cardboard smothering can begin at any time of year. Leave the material in place for at least one year for best results. After removing the cover, allow at least two months to observe emerging weeds. There will be some unwanted plants, as embedded seeds can remain viable for years. Remove undecomposed chips before seeding or planting plugs.
- Also see the writing of Dr. Linda Chalker Scott and other researchers on "arborist wood chips" at <https://gardenprofessors.com/>. Articles and fact sheets are listed below:

Wood chip references:

- www.GardenProfessors.com/why-fresh-is-best-when-it-comes-to-mulch
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXL9n2KNm1E&t=12s>
- Using Arborist Wood Chips as Landscape Mulch, Linda Chalker-Scott, Washington State University Extension Home Garden Series FS160E
- Chalker-Scott, L. 2007. Impact of Mulches on Landscape Plants and the Environment - A review. *J. Environ. Hort.* 25(4) 239-249.
- Chalker-Scott, L., and A. J. Downer 2020. Soil Myth Busting for Extension Educators: Reviewing the Literature on Soil Nutrition. *J. of the NACAA* 13(2):
- Downer, AJ., and B.A Faber. 2019. *Mulches for Landscapes* UCANR publication #8672
- *The Woodchip Handbook* by Ben Raskin, 2021, Chelsea Green. Covers all aspects of woodchip usage, not only weed reduction. This is a guide to the entire topic of woodchips.