



Wood Chips Explained

By Shawn Kidd, Mountain Park Land Steward

The use of woodchips on the various landscapes at Mountain Park has been a hot button issue of late. These wood chips, love 'em or hate 'em, are here to stay. And in fact they are the key to creating a truly sustainable and regenerative ecosystem.

Residents along McNary Parkway and also along Eagle Crest Drive have been stopping and commenting—both good and ill—on the recent work of our land stewardship department: “That looks great...good job guys...that looks awful...why the woodchips?...why not bark dust?”

So this month for our e-newsletter we are taking the opportunity to talk about this incredible nutrient-rich resource that is adorning, and in fact, feeding and sustaining the plant life here in Nature's Neighborhood.

In our efforts to transition away from chemical management*, it is necessary to manage our common lands here in new ways. While this is a grand vision, and a big undertaking, it begins with the tiniest of organisms...

Just as our bodies are now being recognized as symbiotic systems wherein a plethora of species are participating in the functions that regulate healthy growth, disease resistance, etc., so too are our landscapes cooperative living settlements of organisms: bacteria, protozoa, fungi, plants, animals, humans and more. These woodchips—which mimic the plant debris found in mature forests—are fundamental to the health of it all.

Most weeks our office is in communication with arborists, contracting out tree pruning and tree removal jobs that generate, literally, tons of organic material per job. The chips and leaf matter from these jobs are dropped here and are allowed to mellow and compost at our yard before we redistribute them over the land. These chips are not merely ground up tree parts. They are full of all of the many symbiotic organisms that make photosynthesis, nutrient cycling, and healthy soil evolution possible.

As we return these tree remains, their nutrients, and their microorganisms to the soil layer of our Common Property, please know that we are doing our part in the long-term natural cycles of our Mountain Park ecosystem.

*Chemicals were phased out of our management plan in January 2017. The last application of any chemical on our land occurred in October 2016.

At a Glance

- *Moisture retention for water-wise landscapes*
- *Slow release biological fertilizer*
- *Soil repair and regeneration*
- *Weed Suppression*
- *Guards against excessive evaporation*
- *Can aid in slowing or correcting water flow*