



TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Reforestation: Mulching for Site Preparation

Mulching is a relatively new method of mechanical site prep that can also be used to improve an existing stand of timber. This technique is applicable on most any site ranging from light to heavy vegetative/debris cover. Limitations include sites with excessive slope, extreme wetness, and large rock or other debris incapable of being mulched.

Description:

Mulching is accomplished by the use of a heavy rubber-tire or track vehicle with a large spinning drum mounted on the front. These drums are equipped with large hammer-like teeth that rip, tear, break, shred and splinter live woody vegetation, logs, stumps, and virtually anything else in its path down to the desired level. Some of this material may be incorporated back into the soil while the rest is distributed across the ground surface. This provides many of the same benefits mulching has traditionally been associated with as well as others. The equipment generally covers the entire area for best results but strips can be mulched in certain other situations according to landowner objectives. Hand or wildland machine planting of seedlings can then be easily conducted.

Benefits:

This operation is extremely beneficial to the landowner, the site, and existing or newly planted trees in several ways. Mulching carries much less liability than burning and can be conducted throughout the year while prescribed burning is limited to days with favorable burning conditions (no more burn ban delays). The mulched material increases the moisture retained in the soil (especially useful in droughty situations), distributes the nutrient rich organic matter evenly across the site, decreases soil temperatures (as compared to other methods of site preparation), and

reduces erosion by aiding in soil stabilization. This method is highly competitive in price with other comparable site prep methods and can be economically used in areas where burning is not an option. These benefits should allow site prep and timber stand improvements on a year round basis facilitating access for planting and increasing the overall survival and growth of young trees on your property.

Other Recommendations:

Green living material usually mulches the best. Mulching should be planned as soon as possible following a harvest but can be conducted any time and should be followed up with an appropriate herbicide application to help eliminate or control woody or herbaceous species in direct competition with your trees for moisture and nutrients. Mulching should almost always be followed up a herbicide treatment to kill hardwood sprouts.

