



YIKES... ARE TERMITES IN MY MULCH???

Read more in the Blade Runners link regarding the likelihood of your mulch being infested with termites. And more facts on the infamous Formosan termites imported from Louisiana.

It is time to put to rest the old wives' tale that if you mulch the landscape adjacent to your house, you'll have termites. There is a right and wrong way to mulch, and there are many factors involved that will determine whether or not you will have a termite infestation. Simply having mulch there will not mean you will have termites.

Why do we use mulch? Mulch is used to conserve soil moisture, keep down weeds, reduce the soil temperature and provide an attractive covering. For many gardeners and landscape companies, spreading mulch on garden beds is as much the official start of spring as our Tidal Basin cherry blossoms.

Homeowners can limit termite activity by mulching properly. Apply no more than 2-3 inches of mulch to any area. This allows the mulch to dry out regularly, creating a dry environment that termites dislike. You can even mulch up to the foundation of your home if you limit the depth to less than 3 inches.

Although it is not believed that wood chips draw termites to a location, they may create access for an existing termite population if wood chips are placed against the foundation. A 6 inch buffer around the base of the house with nonwhite inorganic mulch will reduce the likelihood of termites invading the foundation.

If you use a landscape contractor, make sure they are using top quality mulch and are limiting the mulch to 2-3 inches. The high grade mulch we use has been decomposing for over 3 months at such high temperatures that termites would not survive. Blade Runners also makes sure that excess mulch is removed and each spring mulch beds are raked allowing all areas of the mulch to dry. Also, when watering plants, the water should be directed to the roots of the plants and not to the entire mulch bed.

Ultimately, termites do eat wood and you should make sure that your house base is termite free before putting any wood products adjacent to it. This is simply good sense and an annual inspection is always advised. What we can guarantee is that we are not bringing termites to your property and we apply mulch materials correctly to not encourage any termite population.

LOUISIANA TERMITE

What about this termite we've read so much about imported from Louisiana? The termite in question is the Formosan termite, imported years ago from China. This termite does cause severe devastation to homes in the southern United States. However, the pest is not found in nature above the 35th parallel - roughly, north of Charlotte - and the ability of a colony to survive the shredding process of mulch, or the 130-degree heat generated in the shrink-wrapped pallet of bagged mulch, makes its spread improbable.

In addition, wood debris does not even leave Louisiana, as there has been a long-standing quarantine in the state for the 12 infested parishes. This was put into place to help protect against Formosan termites being accidentally spread. No wood or cellulose materials may be moved out of these quarantine areas without Louisiana Agriculture Department approval, including all materials from Katrina cleanup efforts. If any type of wood debris is moved out of the quarantine area, it is being done illegally.

For more information on this topic or other related topics, contact your Blade Runners representative. We're here to give you the most up to date information available.