



FYN Topic: Pine Straw Mulch

Question: I have a question about using pine straw mulch. Is it a greater fire hazard than other mulches? Are there any regulations on using it? In Colorado, where I'm from, it was a real concern. Thanks. Fred

Answer: The last State Forester I quizzed about using pine straw mulch saw its fire risk as much lower than leaving highly flammable plants near your home such as dried grass and scrubby undergrowth like Wax Myrtle.

To prepare for the dry season and decrease your home's fire hazard, first remove dead trees, limbs, and brush piles and clean up dead leaves. Also, remove fences that lead right up to a structure. Under mature pine trees, remove tall shrubs, woody vines, Spanish moss, etc. and avoid planting any additional ladder fuel. Concentrate on removing climbing plants, loose leaf litter and dead palm fronds.

Master Gardener Dan Jergensen provided this information after speaking to a Lehigh Acres fireman. There are no fire code restrictions regarding the use of pine straw as mulch in Lee County. Pine straw fires are much worse if you live in a pine forest where pine needles accumulate 3-4 feet deep rather than spread out as a 3-4 inch mulch layer.. However once ignited, pine straw fires do produce a lot of smoke and can be difficult to extinguish. In the future, consider using a stone mulch or lava rock in your landscape beds immediately bordering your house.

Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
<http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>
<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M. 11/17/2012

