

Tree Ring Guidelines

Guidelines and tips for digging rings around the trees in American Fork's parks

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Thank you for your willingness to serve your community. You are doing a great service to American Fork in helping beautify the parks and making them easier to maintain. We appreciate your willingness to serve and hope that you will find joy and satisfaction in serving, and that you will take great pride in knowing that you have made a very worthwhile contribution to your community.

Introduction

Digging the grass away from the trees and filling the ring with mulch serves several purposes:

1. It looks really nice! (For an example, check out Miller Park at 1050 N. 150 W.)
2. It saves time and money by making park maintenance much easier since the maintenance crews can just mow around the rings and not have to do anything special for each tree.
3. It avoids potential damage to the tree trunks in trying to remove the grass from around the tree.

Ring Specifications (3' radius, 4" deep)

1. The ring should be a three-foot radius (six-foot diameter) circle, with the tree in the center. (This is really an approximate measurement, since it is really three feet from the outside of the tree trunk. On very large trees, this may be a considerably larger circle. But since most of our trees are still small, we'll just call it a "three-foot radius" circle.)
2. The ring should be a consistent, four-inches deep, and should be reasonably level on the bottom. This will keep the mulch nice and level on the top. An uneven dirt surface will cause the mulch to also become uneven.
3. The edge and wall of the dug-out ring should also be nice and smooth.

Planning and Preparation

1. In our "test case" of digging 13 rings, we found that it took a strong, motivated, college kid approximately an hour to dig out one ring. Rings in rocky soil took a little longer.
2. It took about another 10 minutes to fill the ring with mulch, depending how far the mulch was from the tree.
3. Please take lots of water. (This would be for the kids digging the rings, since most of our trees don't offer much shade yet.)
4. A cardboard template works really well for cutting a nice, even ring around the trees. A template can be easily made by tying a piece of string to a small nail, and at 3' on the string, tying a pencil. Now you have an industrial-size compass that can be used to trace an arc on a triangular piece of cardboard. Cut the cardboard along the arc,

and cut a small arc at the corner where the nail was placed. More than one digger? Make more templates!

5. Notify the Parks Superintendent, Cal Houghton (763-3060), of how many trees you'll be doing, which park they're in, and when you are planning on digging them, and he will have mulch delivered before you arrive. **Please call at least three days prior to your planned dig date so he can schedule the mulch delivery.**
6. You will likely encounter other people at the park while you are there to work on the trees. Please be respectful of park patrons and any activities that may be going on around the area you are working in.

Digging the Ring

1. Lay the template against the trunk of the tree, and using a shovel, cut into the grass along the edge of the template. Scoop out a little grass along this cut, or wedge it open, before moving the template to the next section, otherwise the cut can tend to "disappear" in the grass.
2. Continue around the tree until the entire edge has been cut and dug.
3. It's easier to dig out grass by digging "backward" rather than forward. i.e., Dig out one or two shovels full, then make the rest of your scoops with the face of the shovel towards the hole that you have already dug.
4. Only take three or four inches of grass at a time. It's easier and still goes pretty quickly.
5. Be careful digging around trees that have been planted in the last year or so. Their roots can still be a bit loose, especially if the top four inches of their supporting soil is removed. In some cases, you may need to remove the grassy dirt and mound plain dirt around them for stability. Press it down firmly with your foot if you do this and it should provide the needed support. You can then cover the top of the mound with mulch.

Mulch

1. It takes about nine (9) cubic feet of mulch to fill a four-inch-deep ring around a small tree. That's three standard contractor wheelbarrows full.
2. Mulch should be spread evenly around the tree and should be level with, or slightly higher than, the surrounding grass.
3. Try to avoid walking on the mulch.
4. If there's just too much mulch to be spread around the trees, leave it for the parks crew to pick up. Please let Cal Houghton know that there's leftover mulch that needs to be picked up.

Cleanup & Disposal of Grass and Dirt

1. Please be sure and clean up all stray rocks, dirt, grass chunks, and trash that have been produced during your project. Grass, dirt, and rocks should be in a big pile. Garbage should be deposited in garbage cans.
2. The grass and dirt that are removed from the rings should be piled in a corner of the parking lot that is accessible by a front-loader.
3. The Parks Department crew will come haul away the pile.
4. If you would like the grass and dirt, feel free to take it. Just don't bring it back!
5. Clean off the mulch pile spot by raking or sweeping up as much of the mulch as possible.

Sample Photos of Dug-out Tree Rings

