

SHREDDED BRUSH

Methods of Utilization

There are several ways shredded brush may be utilized, both in the composting process and for landscaping purposes. It is very important that piles of shredded brush awaiting end use are stored in piles or windrows that **do not exceed 10 feet in height. There have been several reports of spontaneous combustion occurring in shredded brush piles over 10 feet high.**

Compost

Yard waste processors in Illinois, using machinery similar to the Willibald, have had success composting shredded brush, grass clippings and leaves by mixing these materials in approximately equal parts before windrowing. The windrows are monitored for temperature and moisture. Experience has shown that the windrows require less turning to maintain optimal temperatures because of the air spaces provided by the shredded brush throughout the pile. The compost time is approximately one year. Screening of the end product is necessary for material to be marketed, but is not a requirement for material to be given away or used for certain municipal projects. Large pieces of wood in the end product can be removed by hand if screening is not feasible.

Shredded brush can be used as a base for windrows. A 12" layer of shredded brush beneath the windrow allows for ongoing aeration from below, reduces puddling, and helps prevent the mixing of rocks or gravel with the windrowed material during turning.

Grass clippings can be mixed into a windrow of shredded brush on an ongoing basis throughout the summer. The shredded brush will provide the necessary carbon and porosity to allow the grass clippings to compost without becoming odorous. By the end of the grass clipping season, the windrow will be fairly well-composted and may either be used as mulch or allowed to continue composting through the winter.

Mulch

Shredded brush is used as a mulch to retain soil moisture, minimize erosion, control weeds, protect plants from extreme temperature changes and add organic matter to the soil over time as it decomposes. Since shredded brush contains pieces of varying size, it is generally not considered to be a "decorative mulch," such as bark mulch or cedar chips, but it is functionally equivalent to fancier looking mulch products. Its stringy quality makes it especially well suited for erosion control on slopes because it creates a woven effect.

Municipal uses for mulch include:

- Erosion Control** - in 3" - 6" layers
- * on side slopes of landfills
- * on banks or inclines to control erosion.

- * in areas where leachate or run-off occurs for absorption
- * on roadsides to control erosion and prevent run-off

Landscaping/Grounds Maintenance

* as a grounds maintenance material to control weeds and retain soil moisture; in 2" - 4" layers around trees, shrubs and pathways. Mulch should not be placed in direct contact with plant stems or tree trunks, or against wooden structures.

Shredded brush may be offered to residents. This will help with public support of the municipal composting program, also. Residential uses for mulch include the uses suggested above, as well as the following:

- * on pathways
- * in perennial beds
- * around trees, shrubs, flower beds
- * in vegetable gardens
- * as a lawn border
- * as a bulking material in home compost piles where there is an excess of high nitrogen materials (grass clippings, food scraps) and a shortage of high carbon materials.

Sludge Composting

* as a bulking material for sludge composting operations to provide carbon, absorb moisture and provide porosity; the amount of shredded brush used will depend on the nitrogen content, density and moisture of the sludge

For more information on these or other uses of shredded brush, contact the DEP Composting Program at (617)292-5969 or (617)292-5834.