

Straw Mulching

FACT SHEET

MONTANA

What is Straw Mulching?

The application of straw as a protective cover over seeded areas to reduce erosion and aid in revegetation or over bare soils that will be landscaped later to reduce erosion.

When is Straw Mulching used?

This method is used on slopes which have been seeded and have high potential for erosion. It requires some type of anchoring by matting, crimping or other methods to prevent blowing or washing away. Straw mulch forms a loose layer when applied over a loose soil surface. To protect the mulch from wind drifting and being moved by water, it must be covered with a netting such as plastic or punched into the soil with a spade or roller, or by spraying it with a tacking agent. The mulch should cover the entire seed or bare area. The mulch should extend into existing vegetation or be stabilized on all sides to prevent wind or water damage which may start at the edges.

Methods and materials

On gentle to moderate slopes, straw mulch can be applied by hand broadcasting to a uniform depth of 2 to 3 inches. On steep slopes, the straw should be blown onto the slope to achieve the same degree of cover. When applied properly, approximately 20-40 percent of the original ground surface can be seen. The application rate per acre should be about 2 tons (*or one 74-pound bale per 800 square feet*). Straw should be clean rice, barley or wheat straw. Anchoring of straw mulch can be accomplished using the following methods:

Hand Punching: A spade or shovel is used to punch straw into the slope until all areas have straw standing perpendicular to the slope and embedded at least 4 inches into the slope. It should be punched about 12 inches apart.

Roller Punching: A roller equipped with straight studs not less than 6 inches long, from 4-6 inches wide, and approximately one inch thick is rolled over the slope.

Crimper Punching: Like roller punching, the crimper has serrated disk blades about 4-8 inches apart which force straw mulch into the soil. Crimping should be done in two directions with the final pass across the slope.

Matting: Matting is used on large, steep areas which cannot be punched with a roller or by hand. Jute, wood excelsior or plastic netting is applied over unpunched straw.

NOTE: After a fire many trees are weakened from burning around the base of the trunk. The **trees can fall over or blow down without warning**. Shallow rooted trees can also fall. Therefore **be extremely alert when around burned trees**.

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