

## MULCHING PRACTICES

J. A. Rollins - Maine State Forest Nursery

### I. General

- A. Sawdust mulch, 1 inch thick, applied with a 4 foot lime spreader modified by the addition of a large hopper and agitator with enlarged discharge holes.
- B. Time of Application
  - 1. Immediately after seeding with Gandy seeder, and again
  - 2. In fall following the first growing season (for winter mulch)
- C. "Mulchnet"
  - 1. Used to hold the sawdust in place until seedlings emerge and develop to the point where they are able to hold the mulch (usually 4-6 weeks).
  - 2. Available from: Bemis Brothers Bag Co.  
Visinet Mill  
South Second Street  
St. Louis, Missouri
  - 3. Cost - \$.0585/yard in 54 inch width.

### II. Advantages

- A. Ease of application - sawdust is easily handled by machinery and application is uniform with little or no hand work required.
- B. Reduction of splash erosion and the subsequent coating of the seedlings with soil.
- C. Reduction of water losses due to evaporation. Less frequent irrigations.

### III. Disadvantages

- A. Practically impossible to maintain mulch intact over long periods of time. Must be renewed at end of first growing season.
- B. Sawdust will still float off in a heavy rain even with the net in place.
- C. Net rots quickly if buried in soil.
- D. Tractor tires tend to pull net if operator is careless and a tire rides onto the net.

IV. Cost Per Acre (2,381 yards of bed per acre)

A. Labor

1. Application of sawdust (2 men) 7-1/2 hrs. @ \$1.25	\$ 9.38
2. Apply net (3 men) 6.9 hrs. @ \$1.25	8.63
3. Remove net (3 men) 9.2 hrs. @ \$1.25	<u>11.50</u>
<b>Total labor</b>	<b>\$ 29.51</b>

B. Material

1. Sawdust	<u>1/</u>
2. Mulchnet	\$139.29 <u>2/</u>
3. Wire staples @ \$7.00/thousand	<u>7.00</u>
<b>Material cost</b>	<b>\$146.29</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$175.80</b>

1/ No figures available - only cost is trucking it about 2 miles.

2/ Net can be used at least twice and possibly three times.

Discussion

No discussion, but the following comments were noted:

Balboa rye at \$2.50/bushel is seeded. The chopped rye straw for winter mulch costs \$35.00/ton - compared with salt marsh hay at \$45.00/ton in New Jersey.

Rossed bark when available costs about \$25.00/ton or about the same as pine needles (in New York).