



# ask

**Celebrating 20 Years!**  
the landscape professional  
Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

**Welcome to my weekly series!**

Email or mail your questions to: [info@sprigsandtwigs.net](mailto:info@sprigsandtwigs.net) or  
Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335



Thank you Readers for Voting Sprigs & Twigs  
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**Question this Week:** *I was at a local Stop & Shop and noticed a small tree in their landscape that had just fallen over. When I looked closer, it had no roots! What in the world happened? Robin*

## Linda's Answer:

Hello Robin - what you are seeing is the effect of "volcano mulching" of that tree. It seems like everywhere you look, you'll see trees mulched in this manner, especially in commercial establishments. For some reason, maintenance people that don't know any better, like to pile up mulch around the base of trees. Unfortunately, that is a slow death sentence for the trees and every year untold thousands of trees are killed by this type of mulching practice. Mulch should go no higher than the root flare of a tree (the area at the base of the tree that flares out and gets wider). Allowing mulch to go higher up the tree stem, causes small fibrous roots to get started growing into the mulch. Given time, these roots actually wrap around the base of the tree and "girdle" the tree. As a girdling root grows, it expands and eventually cuts off the remaining roots of the tree, which then die. Once that happens, there are no more roots to anchor the tree and the tree falls over, which is what you see in the picture you sent me.



Volcano mulching killed this tree



Volcano mulching is killing this tree

*Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 20 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..*

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