

ask

the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs



Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

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

Question of the Week: *I have these unsightly mushrooms growing in my garden mulch. What can I do to get rid of them?*

Actually, the fact that you have mushrooms is a really good thing that confirms that your soil is healthy and organic decomposition is going on in your garden. Mushrooms are the visible part of fungi that are growing under the mulch and are part of the natural recycling process.



When you use mulch in your garden, you are doing so to slow down weed growth, retain moisture for the plants and to improve the soil conditions with additional organic material as the mulch decays. A healthy garden eco-system will decompose mulch at the rate of 1 inch per year. For all of their positives, mushrooms can be unsightly and a concern because they might attract children. While many mushrooms are safe to eat, I would strongly recommend against eating any, unless you really know your mushrooms. Unless they are eaten, any mushroom is not harmful to people, plants or pets. There is no practical, realistic way to prevent mushrooms, unless you eliminate the fungi growing in the organic material underneath and throughout the mulch, which means you must remove the organic mulch, obviously defeating the whole purpose of using the mulch in the first place. Generally, you will see mushrooms when the weather is wet and once the mulch dries out, mushrooms dry out and disappear until the conditions become right again to promote mushroom growth. You can take a rake or a broom and scrape them off or mix them back into the mulch by fluffing the mulch. Fluffing will also help to temporarily dry out the mulch. Mushrooms also grow in thick layers of thatch in lawns and lawn de-thatching would be warranted in that case.

Your best bet is to ignore mushrooms that pop-up and enjoy them. They are short-lived, harmless and fascinating additions to your garden.

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Linda K. Lillie is the President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc, the premier landscape tree care & lawn care company in SE Connecticut for the last 17 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation work.

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