

## Care

Textraw is Beauty that Lasts: synthetic pine straw needles which maintain their beauty for years. Achieving that long-lasting beauty depends on proper site selection and maintenance. We call this TLC - for Textraw Landscape Conversion.

TLC is about making good choices that produce an environment which is healthy for plant root systems, consistently attractive, and cost-effective.

It isn't by accident that nurseries grow plants in greenhouses. The greenhouse environment provides the ability to control temperatures, humidity, and protection from insects and disease. The controlled environment produces healthy plants.

These plants are then transferred out of the controlled environment into the garden. It stands to reason that maintaining control of some elements of that environment will produce healthier plants.

TLC consists of three basic elements of Best Practices: 1)Site selection 2)Site preparation and installation, and 3)Maintenance.

### Site Selection

**Leaf-fall.** Heavily wooded landscape requires additional maintenance due to leaf fall. Leaves can be either blown off or vacuumed from Textraw which is installed with a coating of StayPut spray. (Such areas may be better designed with shade-resistant ground covers.)

**Pine Trees.** Once natural needles intermingle with Textraw, they will stay intermingled. We recommend that Textraw not be installed under pine trees.

**Flood areas.** Textraw is heavier than pine needles, but lighter than water. Low-lying areas prone to flooding should use a heavier-than-water ground cover.

**Downspouts.** Textraw, which is installed along the drip-line beneath the eaves, effectively disperses rainfall, eliminating splash at the foundation and loss of soil. But use appropriate diverting methods for downspout flow, such as concrete pads or buried flex hose.

**Traffic Areas.** Parking area installations should be designed with consideration given to foot traffic. Walking on Textraw in no way damages it, but the use of stepping stones or equivalent footpaths will reduce product loss and migration due to foot traffic. Use of border edging in traffic areas is recommended.

### Site preparation and installation & Pre-Emergent treatment

**Stripping vs. Top-dressing.** Textraw recommends coverage of 1/2 pound per square foot. This produces an installed depth of 3 to 3 1/2 inches. Each roll of Textraw covers 40 sq ft. The old decomposing mulch should be removed, and the soil treated with pre-emergent, to kill any ungerminated weed seeds.

- If Textraw is applied as a top-dress over old natural straw, seeds in the old straw will continue to germinate, requiring repeated treatments to control weeds. This decomposing material also blocks airflow to roots, impedes evaporation, and promotes a welcoming environment for termites, roaches, mold, and mildew. That means more labor and chemical treatments.
- While the installation may look good initially, the needles cannot be fluffed without mixing the two layers, and the only option will be to continually add layers of Textraw top-dressing.

**Tuck & Roll / Borders** Along all border areas, Textraw should be tucked and rolled for optimal appearance. Borders and edges should be clearly defined, to prevent grass runners from impinging on planted areas, and to assist edging and mowing.

**Slopes.** Textraw stays in place very well on steep slopes. On slopes over 30 degrees, we recommend an overspray of Textraw Stay-Put.

**Stay-Put** is a water-soluble, environmentally friendly tackifier that cures in 24 hours, and will increase the surface adhesion of Textraw. It is dispensed from a standard back-pack sprayer. Stay-Put is also recommended for:

- border areas, where it will maintain the integrity of the border edge
- around the base of trees in the construction of tree surrounds in areas where there is leaf-fall or pruning.

With Stay-Put, leaves can be blown or vacuumed without disturbing the Textraw needles.

## **Maintenance**

**Edging & Mowing.** Textraw has a very long life cycle. The key to its longevity is to keep it in place. Care must be taken not to over-mow. If possible, it is best to install one of the many types of borders along the edge of mowing and traffic areas. Borders not only assist in keeping grass out, but make it easy to trim the edge with a weed-eater. When edging in areas without borders, it is important to use an edger. It is not uncommon for crews to use weed eaters turned sideways for this job. Doing so generally will result in Textraw loss. Also, since the guard is then nonfunctional, there is no protection from material being flung up into the operator.

**Pruning.** Clippings are best diverted with clipper attachments so they need not be picked up. The alternatives are to use a drop cloth to collect them, or to vacuum them in areas which have been treated with Stay-Put.

**Blowing/Vacuumping.** After a heavy leaf-fall, the majority of leaves can be blown off with a standard leaf-blower. Reversible blowers with vacuum attachments can also then be used to clean up remaining leaves.

**Flip & Fluff.** Natural straw quickly becomes brittle and loses its volume. Since Textraw does not become brittle, it can and should be fluffed to restore its volume throughout its life. Any residual organic material in the Textraw will be turned under to decompose, and the color life of the Textraw will be extended as it is turned. Textraw has been tested and is warranted for **4 years** against color fading. The tests are for constant exposure to sunlight. Flip and fluff more than doubles the color life.

**Weeds.** Textraw is sterile. If the soil is treated with a pre-emergent, the incidence of weeds is limited to wind and animal-born seeds. They will be greatly reduced. When they do appear, we recommend that they not be pulled, as this may propagate additional weeds. Simply spray with the appropriate herbicide, then lift and replace the surrounding Textraw, allowing the weed to wither and decompose.

**Cost.** Determining an exact cost ratio to pinestraw is difficult because there is as much bale-to-bale variation in pinestraw bale weight as there is in quality. We try to be conservative to average in these estimates.

Two applications per year is the norm for organic pinestraw. Commercial properties often do 3 times. Some do once. On average, second application amount is only 3/4 of the first application, called "top-dressing". Every 18 months, the bulk of the old material should be removed, and a full dressing applied.

Estimated 4-year life-cycle savings are 40-50%. Textraw has a **4 year** warranty. Accelerated weatherometer tests show no fading over this period. With proper maintenance, life-cycle will be significantly extended.

In addition to the pure cost benefits, there are indirect cost benefit considerations:

- No environment for insects means fewer bugs and less insecticides for bug control.
- No weed seeds and mold spores means less allergies and herbicides.

**Healthier plant root systems, moisture control, and *Beauty that Lasts.***