

Our in-house horticulturist/arborist, Craig Miller, dispenses practical advice for those seeking to simultaneously conserve water and grow thriving, high-visual-impact, drought-tolerant (xeriscape) gardens and landscapes. Please email your questions to craig@cpnmd.org.



ROCK MULCH VS. WOOD MULCH: PROS & CONS

Rock mulch has staying power – it will not degrade with exposure to the elements, does not blow away like wood mulch, and requires no topdressing to keep looking good. It is the preferred material for non-plant areas of your yard, as it does poorly in weed suppression and water retention. Most rock products with a diameter of 1/2" or more allow light and air through, so they require a weed prevention barrier between the rock and the soil. Without a barrier, weeds can easily germinate in the rock, but weed barriers can also inhibit the growth of plants and the free movement of air and water into the soil.

Rock mulch absorbs heat – areas adjacent to rock mulch will be warmer and less comfortable for summer use. In planting beds, it gets hotter and reflects sunlight, which can create an uncomfortable micro-climate for plants, and cause tissue damage. Rock, while easy to maintain, can be tough on plants!



Wood mulch, such as shredded cedar fiber mulch, is extremely beneficial to soil and plants. Wood mulch retains water, provides organic matter to the soil, harbors beneficial microorganisms, provides a favorable environment for roots and earthworms, suppresses weeds, and reduces reflective heat. Because weed barriers will defeat most of the benefits, wood mulch needs direct contact with the soil. In perennial and shrub beds, it can reduce the need for irrigation by as much as 50%.

The only real downside is it has to be top-dressed with a fresh layer every one-to-two years to maintain its effectiveness. Wood mulch, while being beneficial to the horticultural environment, requires more maintenance, but it is a small price to pay for healthier plants and superior water retention!



BOARD UPDATE

Special thanks to our district manager, **Jim Worley**, and finance director, **Eric Harris**, for taking our direction seriously and identifying cost savings and efficiencies that will culminate in our consideration of **lower-than-expected** water and wastewater cost-of-service adjustments for 2021. Folks, as the yellow highlight in the chart below reveals, the proposed inflation-driven, cost-of-service rate/fee increases are the lowest in over five years. As fiscal conservatives, and as your neighbors, we loathe considering cost-of service increases as much as we – and you – dislike paying them. However, responsible governance and fiscally conservative stewardship of our community's water and wastewater utilities require that we annually consider modest rate/fee adjustments and thereby avoid the erratic toggling back and forth between no increases in some years and double-digit increases in others.

Year	Annual Mill Levy (Property Tax Rate)	Annual Water Usage Rate & Service Charge Adjustment	Annual Renewable Water Investment Fund & Capital Maintenance Charge Adjustment	Annual Wastewater Service & Customer Charge Adjustment	Annual Stormwater Charge Adjustment
2021 (Proposed)	19 Mills	2.85%	0.00%	2.85%	0.00%
2020	19 Mills	3.00%	0.00%	4.00%	0.00%
2019	19 Mills	3.00%	0.00%	4.00%	0.00%
2018	19 Mills	3.00%	0.00%	4.00%	0.00%
2017	30.7 Mills	5.00%	55.00%	6.00%	0.00%
2016	41 Mills	12.00%	8.00%	8.00%	25.00%

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: Our next regular board meeting will occur at 6:00 p.m., Monday, December 14, 2020, during which we will host a public hearing on, and subsequently consider, the adjustments highlighted in yellow above. You may watch the live video stream of the meeting, via our website homepage at cpnmd.org, or **Zoom in** and participate in the public hearing by visiting cpnmd.org/board-meetings and completing the brief sign-up form between now and 10:00 a.m. that morning. As our community moves toward a May 2021 election on the cost-cutting prospect of merging CPNMD's water and wastewater utilities with those of PWSD, **we are on the brink of securing our renewable water future wisely and at less cost.** In the meantime, we wish you, your family, and loved ones good health, peace, and prosperity this Christmas/Hanukkah season and throughout the coming New Year.



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