

# News Release



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Mulch & Soil Council Touts Certified Mulch: Formosan Termite Infestation Unlikely**

In the past few days, an anonymous Internet message has appeared warning consumers about potential termite-infested mulch from the New Orleans cleanup after Hurricane Katrina. This message has been picked up by the media—newspapers, radio, and television. The Mulch & Soil Council wants to set the record straight.

For several years, The Mulch & Soil Council (MSC) has been working with the industry, government agencies and major retailers to create product certification standards for both mulch and soil. One of the conditions of certification is that no treated wood from construction and demolition (C&D) can be ground for use as mulch. Thus, mixed wood from the hurricane cleanup would not be allowed in any MSC Certified mulch. Only those products that meet this and other standards can use the official MSC Certification Seal (see below) on their bags. Information on the MSC Certification Program and a list of over 200 certified products is available on the MSC Web site at [www.mulchandsoilcouncil.org](http://www.mulchandsoilcouncil.org).

The main reason for prohibiting construction and demolition materials in mulch is concern about contamination from CCA-treated wood. CCA (Chromated Copper Arsenate) is a regulated pesticide high in arsenic that is applied under pressure [“pressure-treated” lumber] to control wood deterioration—especially in outdoor applications like decks, fences, garden timbers, and playground equipment. It is a source of high levels of arsenic with the potential of contaminating groundwater. Although it is virtually impossible for consumers to tell if CCA-treated wood is in mulch just by looking at it, the MSC can make that determination with its special testing procedure.

As for the possible infestation of mulch with Formosan Subterranean Termites, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry has a quarantine in 12 infested parishes (counties). No wood or cellulose materials may be moved out of the quarantine areas without approval from state inspectors, including all materials from Katrina clean-up efforts.

Louisiana State University termite expert Dr. Dennis Ring explained that this termite was introduced into this country after World War II; it has been around for more than 50 years. The Formosan Subterranean Termite prefers a moist environment at approximately 57°F (14°C). According to experts, the practical survivability

(More)

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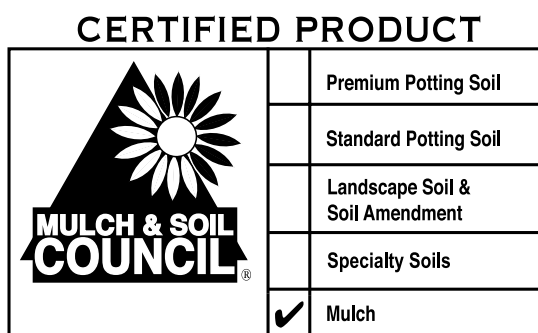
of a soft-bodied insect withstanding the violent environment inside the mulch grinding process or the high temperatures (130°F – 160°F) of mulch packages and pallet stacks is extremely unlikely.

Dr. William Fonteno (of North Carolina State University and program director for the Mulch & Soil Council Product Certification Program) inspected over 500 bags of mulch and soil products taken from retail stores in 2005. No products inspected from anywhere in the country had any live termite presence—not a single bag.

Mulches certified through the Council give consumers, product buyers and regulators a level of assurance that they have passed the requirements of standards and certification, which now include a CCA-detection test. Look for certified products at The Home Depot and other major retailers and garden centers.

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MSC Certification Logo:



This product has been registered and tested for conformance to the standards of the Mulch & Soil Council for the indicated product category. The Mulch & Soil standards do not contain a product category for pesticides, and this certification mark does not apply to pesticide claims. For more information, refer to the MSC website at [www.mulchandsoilcouncil.org](http://www.mulchandsoilcouncil.org).