

# Erosion Control Mulch/Mix



ECM can be used to cover areas of bare soil where vegetation is difficult to grow.



ECM on paths helps to cover roots, absorb and slow down water, and prevent erosion.

## **Purpose:**

Erosion Control Mix, often shortened to “ECM”, is the recommended mulch for erosion control and slope stabilization in the shoreland zone. It is a kind of mulch made of partially composted bark, sand, gravel, stone and wood fragments. It is much heavier than other types of mulch and its mixture of elongated fibers, gravel and soil lock together to protect the underlying soil from erosion. Like other mulches, it also retains moisture, controls weeds and improves the soil as it decomposes.

## **Materials:**

Contact your local gravel pit and ask for Erosion Control Mix. Some transfer stations also make ECM available to residents. It may go by the names ECM, slope stabilizer, erosion control mulch, fine grade ECM, construction grade ECM, wood waste or stump grindings.



Scan this QR code for a list of ECM suppliers throughout Maine:  
Click on “Erosion & Sediment Control Materials & Supplies”

## **Installation:**

ECM should completely cover areas of bare soil to a thickness of 2” for slopes flatter than 3:1 or 4” for slopes greater than 3:1. Keep an inch or two of space between the mulch and base of plants. Erosion Control Mix should not be used in areas with concentrated water flows or on slopes greater than 2:1.

ECM often comes in a fine grade that works well in a more landscaped setting and a standard, coarser grade that is less composted and holds up better on steeper slopes and paths. Some people choose to top-dress the chunky ECM with a few inches of fine grade or regular bark mulch for a more finished appearance. If the ECM is going to be used to naturalize an existing lawn or grassy area, a weed barrier such as several layers of newspaper should be placed down before the mulch is added.

## **Maintenance:**

Mulched areas should be inspected regularly and after each large rainfall. Mulch should be immediately added to washed out areas to maintain the desired thickness. ECM should be left in place, and new plant growth should be promoted. Mulched areas should not be raked.



ECM is a coarse, heavy mulch recommended for use on sensitive shorelines and steep slopes.

### Drawbacks of Other Mulches:

ECM is the most effective mulch for erosion control purposes. If ECM is not available, the following other mulches may be suitable. Any mulch is better than bare soil.

- **Pine Needles** – Washes away easily on slopes. Provides a natural look and is often plentiful and free. Especially good around acid-loving plants like blueberries, azaleas and rhododendrons.
- **Spruce Mulch** – Can be used in lake access areas but not for sediment controls.
- **Bark Mulch** – Better than bare soil, but easily eroded. Most popular mulch and readily available.
- **Wood Chips** – Will float away in rains and does not enrich the soil like ECM.
- **Crushed Stone or Pea Stone** – Does not allow vegetation to grow, creates an unnatural appearance and may not be allowed by DEP or Town depending on distance to water.

Scan here for  
more information



This project was funded, in part, by  
the United States Environmental  
Protection Agency



Portland  
Water  
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From Sebago Lake to Casco Bay