

WATERING OUR TREES

By

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Older, established trees and trees planted within the last two years have very different watering requirements.

Trees planted within the past two years need to be closely monitored. New transplants should be watered well in the first year or two to get them well established. Water weekly (through rainfall or manually) through the first and second season. It's important to apply enough water so that it reaches the base of the root ball and saturates it.

A two inch diameter tree, needs about 15 gallons of water per week; a four inch diameter tree needs about 25 gallons of water per week. If rainfall is not adequate, it's best to apply this through drip irrigation, a hose running at a slow trickle, or with a root feeder. To determine how long it takes to deliver that volume of water, choose a bucket that you know the volume of, and run your hose into it at a trickle until it is full. If it takes your hose about a minute to deliver a gallon of water, then you need to water about 25 minutes to deliver 25 gallons of water

New plantings should also be mulched. Mulch helps to conserve soil moisture, suppress weeds, and moderate soil temperature.

Apply no more than two inches around new plants, and keep the mulch a few inches AWAY from plant crowns. DO NOT pile mulch up in deep cone-shaped mounds around tree trunks, which can hold moisture around trunks and potentially lead to crown and stem rots. Extend mulch out one to two feet beyond the planting hole to allow for the season's root growth, which benefits establishment.

Older established trees and shrubs are typically able to withstand rather long periods without water, depending on the extent and depth of their root systems. Established trees can generally be left alone unless leaves begin to wilt, begin to change color, or margins of the leaves begin to exhibit leaf scorch (turn brown). These symptoms signal that irrigation is necessary. Most tree roots are in the top 12 inches of soil, so you will want to wet the soil uniformly to a depth of about 10 to 12 inches, which means applying about 2 inches of water to the area under the canopy of the tree, or to the edge of the dripline.