



Best Management Practices: Watering Your Tree

Watering is one of the most important things you can do to help a newly-planted or young tree establish in its new home, and ensure mature trees live to their fullest potential.

| Timeline ¹ | Watering Guidelines |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Month 0 (at time of planting) | While planting, periodically water the soil pit when back-filling. Immediately after planting, saturate the root ball and surrounding area with 10-15 gallons of water |
| Month 1 | Frequent, light watering according to need. Check soil often; it is possible for the root-ball to become dry within a day. When testing for soil moisture level, check both the root-ball and backfill soil. Expect to water three to four times a week for the first month, or more frequently during dry spells. |
| Month 2-4 | 2-4 gallons of water per inch of trunk diameter ² every other day. Adjust volume of water according to temperature and presence or lack of recent precipitation. Higher temperatures / dry conditions require more water. |
| Month 5+ | Water weekly until tree is established. ³ |

Watering Methods

Garden Hose: A nozzle-less garden hose can be placed over the root ball and allowed to run slowly until soil is saturated.

Drip Irrigation Tube: Flexible tubing with small holes along the tube is hooked up to a spigot and then placed around the base of a tree for slow, even watering.

Five-gallon bucket: Readily available at any home improvement store, a 5-gallon bucket provides an easy way to measure the amount of water provided for each tree.

Barrel or Garbage Can: Using a 50 gallon barrel or 30 gallon can, drill small holes in the bottom and place next to your tree. Filling the barrel with water will allow for controlled, continuous drainage.

Drip Irrigation Bag: Commercially referred to as a Tree-gator, a 20 gallon bag is filled with water and wrapped around a tree. Holes in the bottom of the bag allow for controlled drainage.



LEAF Interns fill a drip irrigation bag with water. The Nature Conservancy. (2014)

¹ It is not necessary to water trees when the ground is frozen. Resume watering schedule after Spring thaw.
² Trunk diameter, referred to as caliper, is measured at 6 inches above the root-ball.
³ Generally, establishment period is equal to one year per inch of trunk

- Helpful Tips for Watering Your Trees:**
1. Water your tree immediately after planting
 2. Too much water is just as bad as too little water. Overwatering lowers oxygen levels in the soil
 3. During the first two summers of your tree's life, water more often to avoid stress brought on by heat and drought
 4. Mulching around the base of the tree helps to prevent loss of soil moisture

Sources used for Watering Guidelines:

"Watering Trees and Shrubs." *The Morton Arboretum*. 2015. <http://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/plant-clinic/horticulture-care/watering-trees-and-shrubs>.

"Newly Planted Trees: Strategies for Survival." *Clemson Extension*. 1998. http://www.clemson.edu/extfor/urban_tree_care/for17.htm.

"Care of Recently Planted Trees." *Colorado Master Gardner GardenNotes*. 2014. <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/mg/Gardennotes/635.html>.

To create a custom watering schedule specific to your climate and geographic location, consult a local tree nursery, agricultural experiment station, or a certified arborist.

For more on stewarding trees, visit:
www.healthytreeshealthycities.org