

Tree Care Instructions

Watering

After your tree is planted, the next step is to properly care for your trees. Tree care is an easily manageable process. The most crucial part of tree care is watering. Newly planted trees require routine and thorough watering regularly for at least three years after planting. In general, trees need the equivalent of one inch of rainfall per week from June through September.

You must water your tree immediately after it is planted. You do not want to water your tree too much. This will cause the roots to rot, and the tree to die. Overwatering kills more trees than under watering. You will want to check the soil around the tree twice a week and water as needed. The best way to determine if you should water is to feel down in the soil about 6-8 inches. If the soil feels dry or just slightly damp, it needs water.

For sufficient water uptake to occur, the root ball of a newly planted tree must be kept moist, but not saturated. Heavy clay soils that have been compacted during construction activities severely restrict the movement of water and commonly lead to saturated conditions. Watering is not necessary during periods of adequate rainfall. You should not water more than two times per week for a total of 1 inch (approx 10-15 gallons). In sandy soils, water drains more easily, and up to 2 inches of water per week may be necessary to keep the soil moist. Carefully monitor the moisture level in the root ball of trees planted in sandy soils.

Operating automatic lawn irrigation systems often result in continuously saturated soil which may cause severe root damage and tree death, lawn irrigation should not be used in the vicinity of a newly planted tree.

The best way to water a newly planted tree is to place a garden hose at the base of the tree. Run a slow trickle of water for several hours or until the soil is thoroughly soaked. To help hold or direct the water around the root system, build a temporary soil berm or saucer. Avoid short, frequent watering, which promotes development of a shallow root system that is more vulnerable to drying out and other stresses.

There is a misconception that plants do not need water in the winter. Just before the ground freezes in late fall, give your tree a thorough watering. During mild winters, where temperatures are above normal and the ground thaws, give your tree periodic watering. It is a good idea to check your soil for moisture once a week during the winter and water as needed.

Mulching/Fertilization/Pruning/Staking/Wrapping

Place 2 to 4 inches of mulch, such as wood chips or shredded bark, around trees. Mulch conserves moisture, retards grass and weeds that compete with tree roots, stabilizes soil temperature, adds organic matter to improve soil and protects tree trunks from mowers and weed whips. You should replace mulch every two years or so to maintain a three-inch thick layer. Mulch rings may be widened as the tree grows.

Fertilization of newly planted trees is typically not necessary, but can be beneficial in some cases. It is best to consult an arborist about fertilization programs for your newly planted tree. iTrees.com does offer maintenance and fertilization packages, please contact us for more details. There are also many "do it yourself" fertilization products available- please read all instructions carefully and consult with an arborist if necessary, always use slow release fertilizers when applicable.

Avoid the temptation to severely prune newly planted trees. Newly planted trees require only corrective pruning. Remove structural defects, such as dead, broken, or crossing branches. Retain most of the lower branches to help stabilize the tree. Gradually remove the lower limbs as the tree grows during the first 5 to 10 years. Dieback or dead branches are common in newly planted trees due to transplant shock and stress- any dead branches should be pruned out, and the tree will replace them given time.

Staking is not required for most newly planted trees. Young trees standing alone with their tops free to move will develop stronger, more resilient trunks than tightly staked trees. Wrapping protective materials around the trunks of newly planted trees is recommended for many tree species. Wrapping trees in the winter can help protect the tree from sun scald, frost cracking, and animal damage. There are many products available; one popular product is Jobe's Tree Wrap which can be found online and at most hardware stores. If you do decide to use a tree wrap, place it around the tree in fall (November) and promptly remove it the following spring (April). If you have more questions about wrapping your trees, please contact us via email.