

Watering The Australian Way

Best Watering Techniques: Berm Versus Bag Versus Greenwell



Experts agree that effective deep root watering is critical in new tree establishment, particularly during the first two years. There are numerous methods including earthen berms, tree bags, sub terrain irrigation pipes, wetting agent bags and watering rings. Let's look at the pros and cons of the traditional berm versus tree bags and the new alternative coming into favour, Greenwell watering rings.

Earthen berms are straight forward to establish when planting a tree by shaping freshly broken earth. Berms blend in nicely with their surroundings and there is nothing artificial. The downside of berms is they can easily wash away when new from heavy rain, particularly on sloping ground. Berms usually require re-establishment at some stage and then final removal which involves added labor costs and the removal of soil.

Tree watering bags come in several shapes and sizes. Their purpose is to slowly and evenly distribute water to the root ball. Bags became popular as an alternative to building and restoring berms. However, tree watering bags have proven over the years to have a number of drawbacks including:

- Need for removal during winter in snow belt areas
- Vulnerable to vandalism or theft
- Require flat ground
- Hugging the tree trunk potentially causing trunk rot
- Can partially block leading to an uneven watering pattern
- Prone to insect nesting such as fire ants in humid states
- To some observers, they are not overly attractive to look at

This is an advertorial promoting the advantages of Greenwell Water Savers over the use of traditional earthen berms and watering bags. Greenwell is an Australian invention now manufactured in the USA.



Greenwell watering rings have many advantages:

1. They ensure no run off or wastage during a watering event, particularly on sloping ground
2. Do not require removal during winter but can be easily removed with a shovel at end of tree establishment and reused, or recycled
3. Keep grass away from the tree base and hold fertilizer and mulch in place
4. Protect the tree from lawn mowers and weed wackers.

Over watering can be as big of an issue as underwatering. In states with watering restrictions eliminating water wastage is key. The Greenwell watering ring uses between 7-13 gallons depending upon the size compared with watering bags that use up to 20 gallons. The beauty of the Greenwell product is that it assists with remote watering via boom whereby the vehicle operator does not have to leave the cabin to hand water.

Life span is another aspect to consider.

Berms can have a very short life or set like concrete and prove to be difficult to remove at end of tree establishment. Watering bags if removed each winter will only last for a few seasons.

Greenwell watering rings last for up to 10 years and can be reused. New biodegradable additives are being trialled in South Australia which will see the ring purposely breakdown at a predetermined end of life period.

Finally, when it comes to counting the cost of labor the Greenwell tree ring proves most efficient taking no longer to establish than a berm. When it is time to remove the product, it can be reused or put into a plastic recycling bin. Rebuilding berms and the winter removal and reestablishment of tree watering bags, involves added labor.

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