

Caring for Trees

Watering

Trees of all ages require watering to remain healthy. Proper and sufficient watering of trees is vital to the health of our tree canopy. Drip or flood irrigation over the critical root zone (under the tree canopy) is usually the best way to water trees. Avoid spray irrigation if possible. If this is the only option, make sure the sprinklers to not spray the trunk of the tree.

Newly planted trees require regular watering to become established. At the time of planting, a basin can be constructed around the tree, slightly larger than the root ball to help direct water to the tree's roots. Fill the basin 2 – 3 times a week, as needed, to keep the root ball **moist**. Newly planted trees need 5 – 10 gallons per watering, 2 – 3 times per week or 15 – 25 gallons per week. More frequent watering may be required during periods of hot weather. Since soils and environmental conditions vary, periodically check the soil to see that it is not too wet or too dry and that you are watering deeply enough. Be sure to water the entire root area and slightly beyond.

Young, established trees (trees that no longer have support stakes) require infrequent deep watering for root development and good tree growth. Drip irrigation is best to apply water slowly onto the soil, allowing the water to infiltrate into the root zone. A system that allows approximately 40 gallons of water to infiltrate per watering is a good starting point to keep the tree's roots moist. A good system is calibrated to adapt to the soil, weather conditions, and tree type prior to installing and irrigating.

Mature trees may only require watering in the hotter summer months. Water should be applied under the drip line when possible. Trees should be watered so the soil is at field capacity (the water remaining in soil after it has been thoroughly saturated and allowed to drain freely).

Pro Tip: make your own tree watering bucket! Drill ¼" holes in the bottom of a 5-gallon bucket, fill it with water, and place it at the base of the young tree.



Drought Conditions and Tree Watering

During extended dry periods, it is important to keep trees properly irrigated to preserve the City's urban forest while saving water. Some water-wise techniques include watering early in the morning, using mulch to help retain soil moisture, watering mature trees 1-2 times per month, and avoiding over-pruning.

Mulching

To conserve water, cool the soil, improve soil health and control weeds, apply a 4 to 6-inch deep organic mulch around the tree. Leaves, wood chips, and other organic mulches are best as they break down over time and contribute organic matter to the soil. Avoid rock mulch, plastic sheeting, and weed cloth as that can heat up the soil and roots of the tree and inhibit oxygen in the soil. Plastic will also hold too much moisture in the soil and inhibits oxygen exchange, leading to root and trunk rot. An initial barrier of newspaper or a single layer of cardboard can be used to help reduce weed growth for new mulching under trees. To avoid crown rot, keep the mulch off the tree trunk. **Trees will often**

make their own mulch as they drop leaves, so go ahead and "leaf" them where they land for a natural mulch around your tree. If leaves fall on your lawn you can mulch mow them in—no raking required!

