

Proper Tree Watering

Now that the growing season has begun, one of the best ways to keep your tree healthy is through proper watering. Whether it is too much or too little, watering can be tricky.

There is no fixed schedule as to when or how often to water trees as this depends on soil and weather conditions and the size of the tree. A newly planted tree requires more water as it adapts to its new location. The best way to determine if a tree needs to be watered is to check the soil. The goal is to have moist, not soggy soil. During periods of no rain, use a digging tool to check the top two inches (2") of the soil. If this area is dry, then the tree needs to be watered.

Established trees or those that have been in the ground at least two (2) growing seasons require ten (10) gallons of water for every inch of the tree's diameter (dbh is the tree diameter at breast height). The dbh is obtained by measuring from the base of the tree up to a height of four and one-half feet (4.5'), then dividing that number by 3.1416; which equals the tree diameter (1" is equal to 3.1416). Thus, if the measurement is sixty-nine inches (69") and you divide by 3.1416, the dbh of the tree equals twenty-two inches (22").

Remember, deeper is better. Slow and deep watering is the best way to water, which is why drip hoses are the preferred method. Drip irrigation also causes less water to evaporate. Deep watering allows roots in the critical root zone to take up adequate moisture. Be sure to include the area from the tree trunk to the edge of tree canopy. Watering heavily every day may cause the soil to stay soggy or watering infrequently with insufficient water may cause the soil to dry out and will stress the tree.

Newly planted trees or trees planted within the past two growing seasons need the proper amount of water to establish their root systems. To accomplish this goal, the City of Stow uses watering bags on all newly planted trees. As the bags are filled every seven (7) to ten (10) days, twenty (20) gallons of water will be gradually dispersed to each newly planted (2" caliper) tree. After filling the bag, the water is forced (by gravity) through small holes in the bottom of the bag directly onto the root ball of the tree.

Utilizing mulch is a very effective way to keep the soil from drying out quickly. Mulch should be installed to a depth of two to three inches (2-3") and not up against the tree trunk.

Whether watering to help your new tree(s) become established or watering existing trees during dry periods, your trees will thrive under your diligent care and continue to provide beauty and shade for many years to come!

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