WATERING NEW TREES

Growing trees that THRIVE!

SDOT-Urban Forestry
206-684-TREE (8733)
Why water?

- New trees require consistent water for the first 2 to 3 years in order to re-grow roots lost during transplanting.
- During this time, keep the root ball moist!
- If roots dry, trees die!
- How much and how often depends on weather and age of tree.
- Shallow, compacted or sandy soils need more frequent irrigation.
WATERING TREES

- Root systems spread 2-3 times the height of a tree. Trees may lose up to 80% of their root systems during transplanting.
- Most absorbing roots are in the top 12 inches of soil.
- The “critical root zone” is within the dripline.
Where to water

- Water within the dripline of the tree.
- Slow, deep watering (18 - 24” deep!) encourages a drought-resistant root system.
How to water:

Coil a soaker hose around the tree. Simple hose timers make watering easy and consistent!

- Drill 6 to 8 1/8” holes in the bottom of a bucket.
- Place bucket(s) over tree roots and allow to drain.

Watering bags provide up to 20-gallons of slow-dripping water.
How much?

- **RULE OF THUMB**: apply 10 gallons of water for each inch of the tree’s diameter per week. (measure diameter 6” above ground level)

- Plants use 3-5 times as much water in hot, dry weather – you may need additional water.
Watch the tree’s “body language!”

**SIGNS OF:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVER-WATERING</th>
<th>UNDER-WATERING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soil is constantly damp.</td>
<td>Soil is dry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves turn a lighter shade of green or turn yellow.</td>
<td>Older leaves turn color and drop off.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young shoots are wilted.</td>
<td>Leaves are wilted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves are green yet brittle.</td>
<td>Leaves curl.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Algae and mushrooms are growing.</td>
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Mulch helps retain soil moisture and discourages weeds, (but keep it from touching the trunk of the tree – to prevent rot!).

Control weed and grass competition (but don’t let weed whips cut into tree trunks!)

Long, slow watering is more effective.

Create water basins around newly planted trees.

A water basin directs water to the root ball, where it is needed.