

## Tree Watering Guidelines

### SUMMER WATERING

Regular irrigation after planting a new tree encourages rapid root development essential for tree establishment. Under-irrigation often leads to slow establishment, canopy dieback, and bark splits (frost crack and sunscald) on the trunk. After the first couple of years, it is common to find under-irrigated trees that have minimal root growth.

Unlike established trees, recently planted trees and shrubs establish quickest with light, frequent irrigation. Larger volumes of water applied infrequently will not compensate for the need for frequent light irrigation.

**YEAR ONE:** Colorado State University Extension Service suggests the following schedule for watering your newly planted tree:

**Daily for two weeks** depending on temperature and wind. Apply 1-2 gallons per inch of trunk diameter. The trunk diameter on young trees is measured at 6" above the soil.

**Every other day for two months** depending on temperature and wind. Apply 2-4 gallons per inch of trunk diameter

**Weekly until established** (one to two plus seasons) As a rule of thumb, for Hardiness Zone 4-5, establishment takes one season per inch of trunk caliper.

CSU cautions that you should **check the actual water need before watering**. Never apply irrigation if soil is saturated.

**YEARS, TWO THREE, AND BEYOND:** You want to encourage the roots to spread. Watering to the drip line (where the branches end) is a good idea. As the tree grows, it needs about 10 gallons each week per inch of trunk diameter. After year three, if the tree is showing good growth, you may reduce the frequency to every other week, watering to the drip line and beyond. When the tree has established its root system, the roots will extend at least twice the height of the tree in all directions! Water the entire root zone.

During establishment, a lawn sprinkler will **NOT** supply enough water for your tree. While the sprinkler will keep the surface wet, it will not supply enough water to soak the full depth of the root ball. You will need to hand water even if the tree is planted in lawn!

### WINTER WATERING

Your adopted tree will need **MONTHLY** watering in the winter. We do not receive adequate water in the winter to keep the young tree from damage. You **MUST** water in the winter if your tree is to thrive.

Use a screwdriver to see if the ground is frozen. If the blade can penetrate the ground, so can the water. Water the entire area from the trunk to the dripline. If the ground is frozen, wait until we have had several warm days in a row and check again.

#### ADDITIONAL DO'S AND DON'TS

If the tree is planted in an area without a curb, keep cars well away from the tree. Compaction from driving or parking a car near the tree will damage the roots. If possible, construct a generously sized barrier around the tree.

Don't plant flowers around the base of the tree. Digging in this area will damage the roots. Do keep grass away from the trunk of the tree.

Don't fill the parkway area with concrete. Don't use plastic under bark or gravel mulch. Tree roots need air as well as water, and concrete or plastic will suffocate the roots.

Mature trees need water, too! To learn more about caring for mature trees in your yard, log on to [www.watersavers.org](http://www.watersavers.org).