



Post-Planting Care for Trees

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Post-planting care is necessary if your investment in a shade or ornamental tree is to grow for years to come.

Water

For at least one to two years after planting, trees should receive about 1 inch of water per week during the growing season. Generally, trees will need to be watered thoroughly every seven to ten days until they are established. During hot and dry weather, supplemental irrigation is essential for tree establishment. A note of caution, however: excessive water can be as much of a problem and probably kills more plants than does a water deficiency.

The best way to water is by hand, since this allows the best control over the amount of water each plant receives. To determine if you need to water, pull back the mulch and dig down 4-6" beside the root ball. Determine if the root ball is wet or dry. It is possible for the surrounding soil to be wet while the root ball of a newly planted tree is dry. If the root ball is dry, water thoroughly. The kind of soil you have affects how often you need to water. The faster your soil drains and dries out the more often you will have to water.

Grass and Weeds

It is best to remove as much grass and weeds from around the newly planted tree as possible. Grass and weed roots will compete with the tree's roots for water, oxygen and nutrients in the soil. Replace removed grass and weeds with wood chips or bark mulch.

Wood Chips/Bark Mulch

Mulch should be maintained for at least a year at a depth of 2 to 4 inches. In addition to helping to maintain moisture and reducing competition from weeds and grass, mulches may reduce the possibility of lawn mower damage. Caution: Do not mulch right up to the tree's trunk. Leave a buffer zone of 4 to 6 inches. Mulch against the trunk can create an environment favorable to fungi or cause roots to girdle at the base of the trunk.

Staking

Guy or stakes should only be used when necessary, such as when roots are not solid in the planting hole or where the tree could be dislodged by high winds. In most instances, the weight of the root ball is sufficient to hold the tree in place. Guys and stakes should be secured to the tree using a wire through a hose and attaching the guy or stake wires at that point. Normal attachment is at two-thirds the height of the tree. To avoid girdling the tree stem, guys and stakes should be removed after one year or earlier if the wire causes problems.

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