#### **How often do I water my plants?**

#### **A Colesville guide to proper irrigation**

#### **When to Water**

During a summer afternoon, up to half of the water can be lost to evaporation. The best time to water is in the morning or evening, so the roots have a chance to absorb most of the water.

Unfortunately, there’s no magic schedule for watering trees. How often you should water will depend on the size of your tree, soil conditions, and weather conditions. Newly planted trees require much more water than established ones.

The best way to determine when trees need water is to check the soil. What you’re aiming for is moist — not soggy — soil. In the absence of rain or moisture, check the soil with a garden trowel to a depth of two inches. If the soil is dry to the touch, your tree needs water.

#### **How Much**

The rule of thumb for established trees is 10 gallons of water for each inch of the tree’s diameter. You can use a ruler at knee height to measure or just use your best guess

#### **Deeper is Better**

Perhaps the most important element of watering when it comes to trees is the “how.” Slow and deep is your best bet, which is why drip lines are the preferred method of watering (although spray from a garden hose will certainly work). Drip irrigation also loses less water to evaporation compared with overhead watering or sprinkler systems.

Deep watering allows the critical root zone to take up adequate moisture. When setting up a drip line, be sure it extends to the entire area beneath the tree’s canopy and to a depth of 10 inches if possible.

For new plantings: Make sure the ground gets saturated all around the root zones depth and width, so for example: 3g = roughly 10-12” deep & 18” wide, for any plant you can always do a rough measurement of the rootball before planting.

#### **Consistency is Key**

Allowing the soil to completely dry out — or allowing it to stay soggy — will result in a tree that is stressed and therefore more prone to disease and infestation. Keeping the soil consistently moist is essential to healthy trees.

#### **Choosing the Right Species**

In regions where drought is typical, choose drought-tolerant species when planting new trees. Drought-tolerant trees are adapted to dry climates and will not only grow better, but help you to conserve water as well.

#### **Newly Planted Trees**

Young trees are still establishing their root systems and therefore typically need more water. You want to check newly planted trees once a day for the first couple of weeks after planting, and roughly once a week after that during the growing season, based on how much rain we’ve had. Only water when the soil is dry.

To reiterate: The best way to determine when trees need water is to check the soil. What you’re aiming for is moist — not soggy — soil. In the absence of rain or moisture, check the soil with a garden trowel to a depth of two inches. If the soil is dry to the touch, your tree needs water.

#### **Mulch is Your Best Friend -** Mulch is a highly effective way to keep the soil from drying out quickly, especially during excessive heat. Applying mulch 2-4 inches deep will help conserve moisture and regulate the soil temperature. Be sure to brush the mulch away from the trunk after application to ensure that the root flare can receive oxygen. A root flare, also known as a trunk flare or root collar, is the part of a tree where the trunk meets the main lateral roots. It's considered the tree's foot or anchor, and should be visible and exposed to air.

**Water Year Round -** Don’t forget to water your trees in the winter during dry spells. Just because they are dormant doesn’t mean your trees aren’t growing. Water when air and soil temperatures are above 40 degrees F and when there is no snow cover. Your trees will thank you later!

**Other Tips:**

* To keep track of the required 1 inch of rain required each week to establish trees, go to [www.drought.gov](http://www.drought.gov) – you can look up by state, county, city or zip code how much rain you have received that week
* At Colesville Nursery’s Garden Center we sell a variety of top quality irrigation products from home gardening.
  + **Gator Bags** –  these large water bags essentially, continuously water a planting over an average time period of 5 to 9 hours, preventing water loss due to run-off or evaporation. They are very effective during the initial establishment period. However, the bags are durable and will last for many years. Meaning that they can be used as a supplemental watering device even after establishment - especially during periods of drought.
  + **Long wand handles** – help water your plants at the roots without putting moisture on the foliage, this helps with foliar fungus and other diseases
  + **Dramm Sprinklers** – we carry a few different colorful options that offer carefree watering for many different gardens
  + **Soaker hoses** – great for running along a line of plants or snaking through a bed, we recommend burying it with mulch and pairing it with a timer to help you water effortlessly
  + **Timers** – Timers still should be ultimately turned off but they help you from overwatering your plants if you are distracted, have other things to do, errands to run and you don’t want to sit around waiting for the water to run or you’re worried about leaving it running. Timers cut off the water from coming through the hose so that you are not in danger of over watering.