



Watering Instructions

Trees/Shrubs

Newly planted shade trees, ornamental trees and shrubs require 1-2” of water per week initially. This is best delivered to a plant with a small trickle of water. Place your watering wand at the base of the plant near to where the perimeter of the root ball lies. Turn on the water using very low pressure and leave it trickling for 5 to 10 minutes. Then move the location of the wand 1/3 around the root ball. Continue watering. Move the wand a final time to the last 1/3 of the root ball and finish watering. For very small shrubs this process can be accomplished in one or two steps. Larger shrubs and trees will require three to four steps.

Things to keep in mind:

For the first few months of the growing season after a tree is planted the tree draws most of its moisture from the root ball. The root ball can dry out in only a day or two even though the soil surrounding soil remains moist. This slow process of watering keeps the root ball moist while providing water to the surrounding area as well.

Before watering always check the soil with your finger, both near the base of the plant and the around the root zone area. If the soil is clay-based, water for less time. If it is sand-based, water more frequently. Be careful not to over water, because this too can kill a newly planted shrub.

If the weather is warm, water your trees and shrubs more frequently remembering to always water deeply at the root ball line to promote deep rooting. If conditions are windy, pay very close attention to your new trees and shrubs because wind can remove the moisture in a new plant's leaves very quickly.

If time does not permit you to water your trees and shrubs using the slow watering method, by all means water thoroughly using the watering wand as necessary. Keep in mind that the slow method promotes deeper rooting and in the long run is better for the plant.

Newly planted trees and shrubs may need to be watered for 2-3 years until their root systems become established.



Watering Instructions

New Sod

New sod should be watered each morning for 15 to 30 minutes depending on the weather conditions. Shorter if the weather that day will be cool and cloudy and again in the afternoon if it is forecasted to be hot and sunny.

Things to keep in mind:

Never let the edges of the sod pieces (whether on the perimeter of your grass area or in the middle of the lawn) dry out. If the edges dry out they will shrink drastically and create gaps in the lawn. If this happens, later on you'll have to come back and patch the lawn with seed mats. Eventually the lawn will fill in but you will be left with open areas for awhile.

To check and see if your sod is established, grab a handful of grass in several different locations and pull gently. If it doesn't pull up, it's established. If it pulls loose, press it back down into place and wait a few more days.

Once your new sod is established, after about 2-3 weeks, you can mow the grass (keep it high for the first few weeks) and reduce your watering to ¼" to ½" of water every couple of days.

There is no exact science for watering, only recommendations based on previous education and experience. Over time, you'll become more familiar with the conditions of your soil and the needs of your plants.

For additional care information about perennials, I recommend the book *Caring for Perennials*, by Janet Macunovich. The Morton Arboretum publishes excellent shrub and tree care information as well. Their website link is http://www.mortonarb.org/res/CLINIC_hort_Watering.pdf.



Watering Instructions

Perennial Beds

In the beginning, be sure to monitor your perennials beds on a daily basis. After three weeks you can begin to check the bed less frequently. To see whether the perennial bed needs water, move the mulch aside and insert a bare finger into the soil several inches deep. Do this in several locations throughout the bed. The soil should feel cool and moist. If the soil is warm and dry, water immediately with your rain wand attachment, soaking the ground around each perennial. If the soil is cool and moist, check the area again the next day and water if necessary wither by hand or with a sprinkler. Keep in mind that areas surrounded by concrete and light colored fences tend to need more frequent watering.

Things to keep in mind:

Watering ideally should be done in the morning, however, if you arrive home in the evening to find your plants wilting from a day that was extremely hot and windy, quickly get out the hose and water thoroughly.

The goal in watering is to get an inch of water into the ground. That's enough to soak the top 3 to 4 inches of soil within minutes. It also coaxes deep roots to grow over the following few days as the water sinks even lower. Watering less thoroughly does little good and may do some harm because it promotes shallow rooting. If the surface ever dries out, the shallow root zone will not be enough to sustain the plant.

If you are using a sprinkler and want to gauge how long it takes to water 1", set out a small tuna can in the area reached furthest away by the sprinkler. Once this is full, you can turn off the sprinkler.

Never assume after a period of rain that your bed has been amply watered. It may have only been enough to dampen the mulch layer. Always move aside the mulch and insert your finger into the soil level to determine the watering needs of your plants. Conversely, if your mulch appears dry, you may periodically find that the soil underneath is still moist enough and the plants do not need watering.