



# WE NEED TREES..... especially during a drought!

Trees that are on or adjacent to your property are an asset and an investment; increasing the value of your property and providing many benefits to the community at large. Trees reduce air pollution, soil drying, and erosion; sequester carbon; retain water; create habitat for wildlife and other plants; and reduce the urban heat island—even hotter, drier conditions arise in cities as a result of too much unshaded pavement. Lawns are easily replaceable, but a 10-20 year old tree takes 10-20 years to replace!

## ***DURING DRY SPELLS CHECK YOUR TREE FOR WATERING NEEDS!***

**Prioritize watering needs for different types of trees.** The first trees to consider watering are those that will be most vulnerable and affected by dry conditions.

- Newly planted and young trees (1-6" diameter) are not yet established and have a limited root system. These trees generally need supplemental water even when we are not experiencing drought conditions. Basically it will take three years for a newly planted tree to get established.
- Trees growing within a restricted root zone. Examples are trees adjacent to a driveway or house, growing within a landscape strip between your sidewalk and the street, growing in a median or traffic circle will need additional water.
- Trees that have recently received root injury due to construction work will need supplemental watering because the root system has been compromised.

How much water your tree should receive depends upon the tree size. A general rule of thumb is to use approximately 10 gallons of water per inch of trunk diameter for each watering. Measure trunk diameter above knee height. General formula: Tree Diameter times 5 minutes = Total Watering Time (3" equals 15 minutes watering).

Water deeply and infrequently. Frequent sprinkles can lead to poor root structure and decay. Make sure the water isn't running off and down the street.

There is good information on watering at the Friends of the Urban Forest website:

<http://www.fuf.net/resources-reference/tree-care-on-your-own/watering/>

**Mulch to reduce moisture loss.** This will also help keep weeds down. If possible, mulch around your trees with 4 inches of organic mulch. Use wood chips, shredded bark, leaves or evergreen needles as mulch – avoid the use of stone or rock near trees as this increases air temperatures and moisture loss from leaves and stems. **Don't mulch right up to the trunk. Pull back mulch 4- 6" from the trunk of the tree.**

**Keep your trees healthy and pest free.** Postpone any construction activities planned near your tree to reduce impact to the trees' roots. If your tree has any insect or disease problem that may be adding additional stress – treat them accordingly to reduce the overall stress to your trees.

**Properly prune trees and shrubs during time of drought to improve structure, limb stability and to remove dead and weakened branches.** Leaving broken, dead, insect-infested or diseased branches can further weaken a tree during drought and set the tree up for deadly secondary insect and disease problems.

**Do not fertilize a tree that is under drought stress.** Salts in fertilizer may burn roots when there is not sufficient water. Fertilizers may also stimulate top growth resulting in too much leaf area on the plant for the root system to maintain during periods of limited soil moisture.

**Reduce Competition.** Remove all weeds and grass or plants that have high water requirements within the tree basin, or within four feet of the base of young trees. For trees planted alone or in mixed beds, this is also recommended.

**Pruning and fertilizing during drought should be limited or eliminated.** Do not fertilize your tree if it is already stressed unless you are using organic amendments. High-nitrogen or chemical fertilizers have salts in them that cause roots to burn if there is not enough moisture in the soil. Pruning can encourage dormant buds to emerge and stimulate new growth. If you need to prune, do it conservatively by only removing what you need to, such as dead, crossing over and competing branches.

**What if I'm worried about the health of my mature tree?** Find and hire a licensed, insured, ISA Certified Arborist who is knowledgeable about the needs of trees, and educated and equipped to provide proper diagnostic and treatment services. Call your municipal arborist for advice.