



Your Full Service Nursery & Landscape Center
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Caring for Newly Planted & Young Trees

Adding a tree to your landscape is an investment and an asset. Because you've made this investment we'd like to offer a few tips to assist in your tree's healthy growth.

Planting: The planting hole should be as deep as the tree sits in the nursery pot and 3 – 5 times wider than the nursery pot. Rough up the sides of the planting holes to help roots penetrate the soil as they extend beyond the planting hole. Add soil amendments to the native soil at a 50/50 ratio before backfilling to help aerate the soil, conserve moisture and add organic matter.

Watering: We wish there was a simple formula for how much and when to water. But there isn't. Watering needs depend on the type of tree, the soil type, rainfall and temperature.

Roots can extend 3' deep and reach well beyond the tree's canopy. One inch of water on sandy soils penetrates to a depth of about one foot but one inch of water on clay soils penetrates only 4 – 5 inches.

It's better to water less frequently and more deeply in order to water as much of the root zone as possible. Deep watering should be followed by a drying period which allows the soil to "breathe". This drying period should be extended for drought-tolerant species. Insert a probe, such as a long wooden stake, into the root zone. If the probe inserts easily there is moisture in the root zone.

Avoid watering deeply after applying fertilizer as this may push the fertilizer past the root zone where it will not be absorbed by the tree.

Drip emitters should be placed at the tree's the edge of the tree's canopy as this is where the roots are that absorb water and nutrients. Remember to move the emitters as the canopy grows!

Spread a 3 – 4" layer of organic mulch over the root zone to help conserve moisture and reduce weeds. The decaying mulch will add organic matter to the soil.

Staking: It is not necessary to stake all newly planted trees. However, if your tree was staked at the nursery it will probably need a weaning period to

develop its own trunk strength. You'll know if it needs staking if it does not stand up straight after you've planted it and removed the nursery stake. If you need to stake, drive two sturdy poles into the ground on opposite sides, just past the root ball, perpendicular to the prevailing winds and angled slightly away from the tree's crown. Tie the tree to the stakes at the lowest point possible that still provides support. As your tree grows check your ties to ensure they are not growing into the bark of the tree. A healthy, strong tree could be off its support system as early as one year.

Pruning: We all want our young trees to look like a smaller version of a mature tree – no lower branches and a wide canopy. However, your tree needs lower branches to develop a strong trunk. By cutting off lower branches food is forced up the trunk to the canopy, leaving very little available for the lower trunk. If lower branches have not been pruned off at the nursery (which, unfortunately, happens because customers' generally do not want to purchase trees that look shrubby) then leave them until they are larger than your thumb and then prune them off.

Your tree will thank you with shade and beauty if you've provided it with the best environment for its growth.

Information for this article was derived from The Seven Deadly Sins of Urban Tree Care by Tina McKeand in Southwest Trees & Turf.