



TREES ARE WORTH THE WATER!

Trees are the most valuable element of our green infrastructure because of the benefits they provide and the investment they represent. Urban trees:

- Enhance public health
- Create vibrant, livable communities
- Help water soak into the soil, replenishing groundwater
- Combat climate change
- Represent a water-efficient investment; a well-managed urban forest saves more water than it consumes!

Follow these water-wise tree care tips to protect our urban forest and safeguard our water resources.

TREES & WATER RESOURCES

Canopy
canopy.org

Bay Area Water Supply & Conservation District
bawsca.org

Santa Clara Valley Water District
valleywater.org

Tree Watering Guidelines
canopy.org/tree-info/caring-for-trees/trees-and-water

Save Our Water and Our Trees
saveourwater.com/trees

Tree Needs: Canopy Tree Library
canopy.org/tree-info/canopy-tree-library

Identify Your Trees
urbantreekey.calpoly.edu



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canopy.org
info@canopy.org
650-964-6110



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Save Our WATER and Our TREES

Tips for Water-Wise Tree Care



Water-Wise Tree Care

Water Wisely

Assess soil moisture: Dig or probe the soil to a depth of 6 to 12 inches at several locations around the tree's drip line. Damp soil is good. Soggy soil means your tree is getting too much water, which can harm it. Dry crumbly soil means it's time to water!

Water gradually and deeply: Apply water slowly and evenly to the tree's root zone, particularly around the drip line, saturating the soil to a depth of 6-12 inches. Allow soil to dry out between waterings.

When to Water

Young trees: Water every other week, or once a week for recently planted trees. Saturate the soil around the tree's drip line.

- Young trees require more frequent watering, especially in the first 3 years.
- Use 10-15 gallons of water per inch of trunk.

Adjust watering as your tree grows: Over time, water farther away from the trunk, and consider removing additional lawn. Water thoroughly, but less frequently, allowing the soil to dry out between waterings.

Mature trees: Water once a month, or when soil is dry 12 inches below surface.

- Native Oaks shouldn't be watered at all during the summer.

Trees' water needs vary based on:

Species: Look up your tree species' watering needs on Canopy's tree library. (See back panel)

Age: Young trees require more frequent watering (but less volume of water) than mature trees.

Health: A stressed tree may require more water than a healthy tree. For tips on assessing the health of your tree or hiring a certified arborist, visit canopy.org.

Site conditions: Factors like soil type, sun exposure, weather and nearby water sources also influence watering needs.

How to Water

Hand-watering: A good choice for establishing young trees. Build a soil berm around the tree to hold 10-15 gallons. Widen the berm as the tree grows.

Drip irrigation: Effective because water is applied at a slow rate directly where it's needed.

Soaker hose: Can also be very effective and cost-efficient; install soaker hoses circling around the tree in coils near the edge of the tree's outermost branches. Run on low for about an hour.

Five gallon buckets (use 2 or 3): Drill 3-5 small holes in the bottom of the buckets and place around tree; fill the buckets with water and leave to drain.

Avoid: Sprinklers and spray irrigation can be wasteful for watering trees. If this method is necessary, use water-efficient nozzles and apply only 1 inch of mulch to allow water penetration.

NOTE: Lawn irrigation does not water trees effectively. It generally reaches only the first few inches of soil, encouraging weak surface roots.

Mulch to Conserve Moisture

Mulching Tips

- Use organic matter such as wood chips or leaf matter.
- Apply mulch 3-5 inches deep (or 1 inch deep if using spray irrigation), extended at least as far as the drip line.
- Keep mulch a few inches away from the base of the tree.
- If weeds persist, place a layer of newspaper or cardboard underneath the mulch.
- Replenish mulch every spring.

Mulch serves to:

- Insulate tree roots from extreme temperatures
- Slow evaporation, so you can water less often
- Suppress weeds
- Feed nutrients into the soil as the mulch breaks down
- Provide a buffer, protecting the tree from mowers and weed whackers

Lawn removal: help your trees transition!

Removing your lawn can be a water-wise choice, but remember to help your trees transition. Trees in lawns develop shallow roots and are accustomed to frequent shallow watering. Use mulch liberally to help transition to a less frequent, deeper watering schedule. Consider installing a drip system.

