

Maintenance Tips for New Trees

WATERING

Watering should be done during the growing season to supplement natural rainfall. For newly transplanted plants approximately one inch of rainfall every week to ten days should be adequate. In the second growing season, after plants are established, less moisture is required, maybe an inch of water every other week. The amount of watering may need to be adjusted for your soil type. Heavier soils take longer to dry out and lighter soils can dry within a few days. Check your soil at about 5" below the surface approximately one week after applying an inch of water. If it's dry, it's time to water again. Still wet - wait.

An easy way to determine the amount of time your sprinkler requires to apply an inch of water is to simply place a container with straight sides within the sprinkling area. You will have applied an inch to the area when the container holds that amount. Avoid frequent light watering. It's better to soak the ground thoroughly at the time of watering and it's usually not necessary to water more than once a week using this method. Plants in mulched beds will require less watering than ones in un-mulched areas. Also, plants in shade, such as on the north or east side of the house, will require less water than ones in full sun.

MULCHING IS IMPORTANT

Properly mulching your plants provides many advantages. All mulches produce the same basic benefits. They stabilize soil temperature and moisture. They provide an area free of competition from grass and weeds, as well as keeping mowers and weed trimmers away from young plants. Finally, they provide a neat and professional appearance. Simply removing the sod around the plants and keeping the area cultivated is sufficient if you have the time to devote. That benefits plants in the same way a farmer helps his crops by cultivating his fields or you do by hoeing the vegetable garden. Applying mulch to the area will reduce labor by keeping the weeds down and keeping moisture and temperature at a more constant level.

Shredded bark is one of the most popular of the organic mulches. Applied 3" to 4" thick, it can create a very attractive weed barrier. Other organic mulches such as cocoa bean hulls, bark chunks or bark chips are options for mulching beds. They all provide a good soil conditioner as they break down.

All organic mulches need to be replenished periodically. Inorganic mulches such as decorative stone, when installed over a commercial weed barrier such as "Typhar", provide more permanent mulch. Each type of mulch has advantages and disadvantages. It is highly recommend that you provide mulched beds for all your plant material. You'll be pleased with the results.

FERTILIZING

Fertilizing can provide a helpful boost to plants that are not in good soil or are stressed by transplanting or severe weather conditions.

Water-soluble fertilizers can provide a quick boost to newly transplanted plants. Mir-Acid is one brand that works well for evergreens, broad-leaf evergreens and ground-covers. Miracle Grow or Rapid Grow are two popular brands for a fast release water soluble fertilizer for deciduous plants.

No matter what fertilizer you use, make sure you always apply it by the label directions. Your plantings should not be fertilized between the end of July and the middle of October.

INSECT AND DISEASE PROBLEMS

Insect and disease problems are always a factor with plantings. The healthier your plants are the less they will be affected by an insect infestation or a plant disease. To keep your plants as healthy as possible you need to reduce the stress that would normally weaken a plant. This can be done by providing proper watering, mulching and fertilizing.

Inspecting your plants periodically will keep you on top of any problems that might develop. Most insect problems are quite visible and fairly easy to control. Insecticidal soap, for example, will control a majority of the common insects with minimal environmental or personal hazard.

Disease problems are more difficult to diagnose, if you suspect any problems of this nature with your trees, please contact the Village of DeForest Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Department at 846-6751.

KEEP MOWERS AND TRIMMERS UNDER CONTROL

Each year, many plants are severely wounded and sometimes destroyed by the damage caused by lawn mowers and power trimmers. Both can cut into the bark of young trees and shrubs, destroying the thin growing layer of tissue that is the life-line of the plant. Keeping a mulched area around your planting will reduce the possibility of injury to your plant material. If you need to trim around the base of plants, we suggest doing the work with hand tools.