



NEBRASKA STATEWIDE

Arboretum

PLANTNEBRASKA.ORG

Watering Guidelines for Newly Planted Trees

Appropriate watering is the most important thing you can do to help your newly planted trees survive and thrive. Here are some tips to get you started.



1

Water approximately 1 inch of water per week

Watering a newly planted tree isn't as black and white as you might think. The basic tree watering guideline is 1 inch of water per week. But the amount a tree truly needs depends on many factors, such as tree species and size, soil conditions, rainfall, temperature, time of year, site exposure to sun and wind, and whether the tree is dormant or not.

2

Check soil moisture frequently

Variable conditions mean variable needs for water amount and frequency. Check the soil moisture level by inserting a popsicle stick, dowel, or similar probe into the soil. If it comes out dry and clean, you probably need to water. If it comes out discolored with some soil particles sticking to it, there is sufficient moisture. The probe shouldn't be saturated and dripping wet, nor should it be dusty dry. Either condition for a prolonged period of time can severely damage or kill a tree. Aim for damp soil.

3

Water slow and deep

It is ideal to water slowly and deeply, allowing the water to thoroughly soak the planting hole and surrounding soil. This will allow for less frequent watering and give roots a better chance to establish quickly. An effective way to water your trees slowly and deeply is to lay a hose at the base of the tree and turn your faucet on so that just a trickle comes out of the hose (duration depends on all the variables above and the rate of your trickle). Or place a 5-gallon bucket with small holes in the bottom right next to the tree—just fill it (once or twice) and let the water slowly seep out of the bucket and into the soil.

4

Water once per week—more if hot, less if not

Once a week watering is the general guideline, but a higher frequency will likely be needed when the tree is newly planted and/or if temperatures are high. Dormant season water needs are minimal, but if it's dry with a week or two of higher than normal temperatures, a good watering is beneficial.

Visit plantnebraska.org for more resources on tree planting and tree care, garden making, Nebraska natives, sustainable landscaping tips and more.