



Plant Maintenance

Proper maintenance is vital to the survival and development of a perennial plant such as a tree.

Although maintenance may seem complicated, it really can be broken down into three separate categories.

The first, and probably most important, relates to watering. Watering of your plants depends on the specific conditions in your own landscape. Rainfall, humidity, sun exposure, wind, mulching, soil condition, etc., can all affect how much water you will need to give your plants. A good test is to clear away any mulch and inspect the soil around the plant. If the soil is wet, do not water; if it is dry, water it. In general, you may need to water your new plantings once a week during dry periods the first year. Use a plastic soaker hose or move the end of the hose from plant to plant, watering at a slow trickle in order to completely soak the entire root ball. Do not use a root feeder to water. It can create air pockets around the roots of your plants. In general, probably a higher percentage of trees die from over-watering than from under-watering. Be sure to monitor your trees closely to make sure this does not happen. Another easy test is to simply probe with a spade or rod adjacent to the root ball and determine if water is standing. If this problem exists, you will need to reduce the amount of water getting to the tree from either your hand-watering or from automatic sprinkler operation. For fall plants, a good soaking in late fall (November), weather permitting, will usually protect your plants from a long, cold, dry winter.

The second category is fertilizing. Normally, only a root stimulator or new plant starter is recommended during the first year, and even this is optional. In subsequent years, you will probably want to fertilize with a tree and shrub type fertilizer. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on the fertilizer bag.

The third and last category would be protecting your plants from insect and disease infestations. Unless you are knowledgeable in the application of chemicals for the many different disease and insect infestations we commonly encounter in the Midwest, we would recommend you only monitor your plant for abnormalities.

Remember, plants are living things and need a little tender, loving care!

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