

### Watering Landscape Plants

**I'm going to try to make it rain. Surely writing about watering landscape plants will make something happen, won't it?!**

**As much of the area continues to miss beneficial rains, it might be time to considering a watering program to alleviate soil moisture stress. Already been watering? Maybe you'll get some ideas to try and save at least a little water!**

**Landscape plantings tend to prefer moisture in the form of deep watering. What that simply means is that watering to get moisture to reach at least a foot down in the soil is preferred over light waterings that only wet the soil surface. While there are lots of roots in the soil surface, there are a number below the surface as well that are missed when rainfall is light or watering programs don't allow for a good soaking. You can check soil moisture by using a metal rod, wooden dowel, electric fence post or something similar to check depth. Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet. Always try to wet soils to a twelve-inch depth.**

**If you've been even just a little bit moisture deficient, consider a good watering this fall. Although all perennial plants benefit from moist soils prior to winter, it is especially important for newly planted trees and shrubs because of their less than developed root systems. Even trees and shrubs planted within the last two to three years are more drought sensitive than a well-established plant. Evergreens are even more at risk because moisture is lost from the foliage.**

**Newly planted trees/shrubs can be watered fairly inexpensively using a five-gallon bucket. Drill a one eighth inch hole in the side of the bucket near the bottom. Fill the bucket and let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Refill the bucket until you've applied approximately ten gallons (larger trees will require more!)**

**For established landscape beds or foundation plantings, consider a soaker hose. Rather than just laying one out next to your plants (they are notorious for uneven watering!), increase uniformity by hooking the beginning and the end of the soaker hose to a Y-adapter. This will help equalize pressure with the results being a more uniform watering. Try to get an adapter with a shut off valve so water volume can be controlled and water will soak in rather than run off.**

**Circle the soaker hose around larger trees at a distance within the dripline (outermost reach of the tree's branches) of the tree but at least half the distance from the trunk to the dripline. Circle several times on smaller trees to avoid watering areas where roots are absent.**

**Time yourself the first time you water with a soaker hose so you can determine**

**how long it takes for water to reach twelve inches. If you are seeing surface runoff, reduce the flow, or build a berm with at least a 4-foot diameter around the base of the tree to allow the water to percolate down through the soil, instead of spreading out.**