



## The BCLS Landscape Services Guide to Watering

Proper watering requires only common sense and an inspection walk around your property once or twice per week from April to December. By following these simple guidelines, you can help your plants thrive, reduce the time required for watering, and conserve water.

In general, new or recent plantings require more frequent watering than established trees and shrubs, which have had an opportunity to set their roots into the surrounding soil. During prolonged periods of hot or dry weather, plants have a greater need for supplemental watering, and even large, established trees may require watering to avoid drought stress. A walk around your property every few days during summer will help identify plants that show drooping foliage or other signs of dryness.

In addition, you can check the amount of moisture in the soil by checking with your finger at a depth of 3-4". If the soil is cool and moist, no water is needed. If the soil is warm, dry, or crumbly, it's time to water again.

During the cold winter months, plants use less water. However, new plants particularly evergreen trees and shrubs can benefit from occasional winter watering when the soil is not frozen. This helps them replace water lost through leaf and bark transpiration, and root growth during the "dormant" season. You can also help reduce water loss and prevent "winter burn" by spraying evergreens with Wilt Pruf, an anti-desiccant, applied on an above 40 degree day in late November-early December.

The following is a brief summary of how to water. Please note that watering amounts and frequency should be adjusted as needed to reflect your soil, other site conditions and weather. Remember: only a long or steady rain that really soaks into the ground can provide water for plant roots. Light or sudden rains usually "don't count" for watering plants.

**NEW TREES AND SHRUBS** - Water twice per week for the first several weeks, then every 3-5 days during the first growing season following installation.

In hot weather, twice per week watering may be needed. After September, plants use less water and once per week should be adequate. Continue same frequency during the following year. In hot weather water every 3-5 days. During cool weather (below 50 degrees), reduce watering interval to 6-7 days.

Be sure to water plants efficiently. Trees or shrubs should be hand watered by allowing the hose to slowly fill up the earthen planting saucers in order to soak the rootball and immediately surrounding soil. As a rough guide, allow about 1-2 minutes of watering time for each inch of trunk diameter of a tree, and about 20 seconds for each foot of shrub height or spread.

**NEW GROWTHCOVERS** - Water by hand or with a sprinkler every 3-4 days during the first growing season. Reduce watering interval to every 2-3 days during hot or dry periods, and increase interval to every 4-7 days during cooler weather. Signs of under-watering are leaf wilting or browning of leaf margins. Over-watering results in off-color plants (yellowing of foliage), wilting leaves and stems, and rotted or blackened foliage.

**PERENNIALS AND ROSES** - Water every 2-3 days during the first growing season. Hand watering or trickle-type irrigation is best. If overhead watering is necessary or more convenient, try watering during the 6-10 a.m., period, so that the sun will dry foliage quickly and help prevent fungus growth. Reduce watering to every 4-5 days during cooler weather.

**NEW LAWNS** - Water new sod lawns every dry day through the end of hot summer weather (or for the first 5-8 weeks for lawns sodded in fall), until the grass has become established. Then reduce watering to every 3-4 days during cool weather. For best results, water lawns during the 6-10 a.m. period, so that the sun will dry the grass quickly and help avoid fungus or disease problems.

**ESTABLISHED PLANTINGS** - These benefit from supplemental watering during prolonged hot or dry periods. Watering helps avoid drought stress, which can weather plants and make them more vulnerable to pests and diseases. As a reminder, supplemental watering is especially important for any established plantings that have experienced unusual stress (e.g. , due to construction work near root systems, trunk injury, or serious pest or disease problems).

**ESTABLISHED LAWNS** - For sod and fine bluegrass lawns, water every 2-3 days during warm weather, and every 4-5 days during cooler weather. For fescue lawns and other grasses that tolerate drier conditions, water every 3 days during summer and every 5-7 days during cooler, wetter weather. In general, it is better to under, rather than over, water. When grass is an established lawn gets too dry, it becomes "brown" and goes dormant until cooler weather. When grass stays too wet, it becomes much more susceptible to fungus and other pest and disease problems, which can be difficult to correct.

**SPRINKLER SYSTEMS** - When properly installed, adjusted, and maintained, these can be effective and convenient. However, for best results, they should be: (1) Adjusted seasonally to increase or decrease watering time in hot/dry or cold/damp weather; (2) checked weekly to make sure that specific plants and lawn areas are not receiving too much or too little water. A sprinkler system cannot substitute for simple - but important - inspection walks around your property. As a reminder, all sprinkler systems should be drained in the fall to avoid freeze damage to pipes and heads.

#### **HELPFUL EQUIPMENT FOR WATERING:**

- Sturdy, flexible, and long lasting Flexogen garden hose.
- A hose reel.
- A Nelson "Spot Rain" or similar, adjustable sprinkler.
- A "wand" - type watering nozzle, especially for roses, perennials and annual flowers.
- A spring-type or automatic faucet valve.

We hope these guidelines will be helpful. Please feel free to ask any questions; we're happy to help.