

Piala's Plant Care Recommendations | Newly Installed Shrubs & Trees

GENERAL

Proper watering is one of the most important considerations to ensure that your plants will not only survive but also thrive. Most trees could live for hundreds, if not thousands, of years; but, stresses; i.e. too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, too high a PH or too low a PH, etc; take their toll and eventually most trees weaken and die. A shortage of water is, to some extent, one of the stresses we have some control over. This control, when correctly exercised, can make a big difference in how well your plants grow.

TREES, SHRUBS, EVERGREENS

NEWLY PLANTED

Planting should be done so the top of the root mass is level with the surrounding area. Use leftover soil to make a berm around the edge of what was the excavation for planting. If the plant is small, the berm may be only two or three inches high. In the case of a large tree, the berm may be eight inches or more high. On a hillside a berm is only necessary on the downhill side.

Open the valve to which a hose is attached about halfway and fill the inside of the berm almost full, then turn the valve off and let the water soak in. Repeat this procedure three more times to complete the plant's initial watering.

Weather and soil type will have a great influence on when to water the plant again. About once a week check the soil around the plant to a depth of two or three inches. If it is very dry; water as described above. If the soil is moist, check every few days to see if the plant needs water. Initial symptoms of too much or too little water are the same: leaves wilt. It is better to water thoroughly less often than a little bit frequently.

New plantings should be tended carefully for at least a year. The larger the plant is when it is planted, the longer it takes to become established. Trees, shrubs, and evergreens are usually established after they have passed a few winters and leaf out fully and grow substantially.

ESTABLISHED PLANTINGS

Relieving the stress of drought will improve the vigor and can add to the life of your trees, shrubs, and evergreens. When little or no rain has fallen in a few weeks, during the growing season; and, especially if conditions are hot and windy, it's time to water. Set the hose near the trunk or main stems of your plant and adjust the valve to about 50% of full throttle. Let the water run about five minutes on smaller plants (trees up to a two inch diameter and shrubs and evergreens up to about five feet tall) and ten to fifteen minutes on large plants. This is adequate every few weeks. Even large, long-established trees will benefit from this treatment.

Remember that it is better to water your trees, shrubs, and evergreens thoroughly less often than a little bit frequently. This deep watering encourages the roots to go deeper, where there is more natural moisture.

All evergreens can benefit from a thorough watering, if conditions are dry, late in the year before hard frost sets in--usually, late October or early November.

LAWNS

NEWLY PLANTED

Whether seed or sod is used to start your new lawn, it is critical that it be kept moist until substantial rooting has occurred. This requires daily watering, if the weather is dry, and is best achieved with sprinklers or a sprinkler system. Initially a sprinkler turned on at full throttle for about fifteen to twenty minutes in each location is adequate. The idea is to keep the seed or sod and the soil immediately below it moist. This daily--if substantial rainfall does not occur--regimen is necessary for about three weeks.

After a significant amount of growth has taken place, i.e. seeded lawns are three to four inches tall and sod has anchored itself in place, the frequency of watering can be reduced to every other day; but the time period of actual watering should be increased to roughly a half hour in each location.

ESTABLISHED

Lawns that have been mowed to a height of about two and a half inches at least a half dozen times and have successfully recovered from a winter can be considered established. Established lawns should receive at least one inch of water a week during the growing season. A rain gauge can be a big help in determining if your lawn is getting the proper amount of moisture.

To determine how long to leave your sprinklers on or to leave a sprinkler in one place, place a rain gauge or coffee can under the sprinkler and determine how long it takes to fill it with one inch of water. Sprinkle accordingly, i.e. if a half inch of rainfall has fallen in a week, you need to sprinkle an additional half inch.

If no rain has fallen for some time, the inch of water your lawn needs should be delivered a half inch at a time twice a week or one inch once a week. A little water every day evaporates quickly and may not penetrate to the roots. Time your sprinkling so that the blades of grass are dry going into the night to avoid fungus problems in your lawn.

ANNUALS, PERENNIALS, VEGETABLES

NEWLY PLANTED

In most cases these are seeded or planted as smaller, starter plants. For seeds to sprout or small plants to take root an adequate amount of moisture is necessary. This is best done by using a watering wand or a soaker hose. Water plants with a wand to the point where water barely begins to puddle (usually about 5 to 10 seconds), then move on to the next plant. When all the plants have been watered, repeat the procedure two more times; and check the soil to be sure the water has penetrated sufficiently to soak the root zone, usually two or three inches. Seeds must be kept moist; but a deep watering as described above is not necessary, until the seeds have germinated and attained the size of starter plants.

If plants are close together as in a perennial border or a vegetable garden, a soaker hose running from plant to plant can be very effective and save time. Use the kind of soaker hose that oozes water rather than spraying it into the air. This conserves water and keeps the tops of the plants dry, thereby helping to prevent fungus problems.

ESTABLISHED PLANTS

If the top two or three inches of soil are dry and, especially, if the plants are simultaneously wilting, it's time to water. If soil is crusted around the plant, it should be loosened with a hoe. Water as described above, using a wand or a soaker hose. It is important to keep the tops of the plants from getting wet to reduce the probability of developing and spreading disease. Watering once a week is sufficient unless conditions are especially hot and windy. Heavy rains can eliminate the need for watering. Remember that the initial symptoms of too much or too little water are the same: plants wilt.