

Tree Care for Parkway Trees

The following care instructions will improve the chances of survival and long-term health of newly planted parkway trees.

Tree Care for New Plantings

Special care is needed for the successful establishment of newly planted trees. It is important to consider that when a tree is dug for transplant as much as 80-90% of the root mass may be lost. This root loss results in a period of stress where the top growth is stunted while the roots regenerate. This condition is called transplant shock. The larger the tree the longer period of transplant shock. For a 2-2.5" trunk caliper tree this recovery period can be two to three years, while for a 4" tree transplant shock may last 6 or more years. Special attention should be paid to trees during this period and subsequent years during drought.

Watering: The primary care needed for newly planted trees is soil moisture management. The soil around the tree should be kept evenly moist but not soggy. Slow watering by trickling a hose near the base of the tree for 15- 20 minutes or filling a tree water bag once to twice a week is usually adequate. When hot, windy, and low humidity conditions exist more frequent watering may be needed. A single watering of 20 gallons will cost less than 14 cents. Check the soil under the mulch to be sure it is not wet before watering. Over watering can drown trees by suffocating the roots. Over watered trees will often have yellowing of the leaves.

Mulching: Maintaining a layer of shredded hardwood mulch 2-4" thick will help conserve soil moisture and buffer the soil temperature. Excessive mulching, volcano mulching, the use of plastic or landscape fabric beneath the tree, or piling dirt against trunk are all detrimental to tree health. These practices will prevent oxygen from reaching the roots, favor organisms that cause trunk basal decay, and encourage the growth of sucker sprouts and surface roots.

Fertilizing: Use of fertilizer should be avoided for at least one year following planting of a tree. After the first-year fertilizer may be beneficial if applied at the appropriate rate for the product and size of tree.

Weed Control: Keep the tree ring free of weeds and grass by using mechanical means such as hand weeding or a light tillage with a hoe. Use of herbicides should be avoided if possible. When use of herbicide is necessary, avoid direct contact with the tree and its rootzone.

A healthy parkway tree will add value to home and your assistance will be greatly appreciated by the community.