

Watering Newly Planted Trees, Shrubs and/or Perennials

First before we start let's define what constitutes a *good rainfall*. A good rainfall is either a light rainfall period of 16 hours or more or a medium rainfall for a period of 8 hours or more. Rainfalls from a thunderstorm and long periods of heavy rainfalls are practically worthless as the rain comes down too fast to be absorbed properly, mostly running off into the streets and into the gutters/sewers. NOTE that good rainfalls in the months of June, July, August and September are rare. Therefore, in most cases, you will need to supplement the inadequate rainfall we receive here in MD.

How and When to Water?

In general, when establishing newly install plants, you need to water two to three times a week or at least once every two to four days unless we get one of the good rainfalls as I described above. When we receive such a rainfall, then you can plan to water 24 to 48 hours later unless we receive another good soaking. Overall, water all new plantings a minimum of twice a week (whether its water from Mother Nature or from you) at least twice a week from April through September during their first **two** years from the date of installation.

What is the best way to water my plants? In most cases watering by hand with a hose and nozzle or via a watering can is not going to do any good. First of all you'd have to water the plants with a gently light flow and keep it up in that one small area (an area no larger than 6 by 6 feet) for at least 20 to 30 minutes, before moving on to another area. You'd need a lot of excess time on your hands and the patience of a saint. I don't know about you but that doesn't even close to describing me! So I recommend you use a sprinkler, preferably a good oscillating one. Once you set it up to cover the area you need to water, leave it in place for at least 3 to 4 hours. Yes, three to four hours! It takes that long to deliver from 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch of water to the site being watered. Then if you need to cover another area, move the sprinkler to that area and leave it in place for another 3 to 4 hours.

Does it matter what time of day I water? The amount that evaporates into the air is somewhat trivial, unless we have a combination of High Temperatures (over 86 degrees F) and LOW humidity (dew points of 68 or lower), so the answer is; not really. Yes, a little bit more will be lost to the air during mid day but its better to water the plants than not water at all. The preferred time of day would be early morning to around noon, but if all else fails, watering near sunset works too. Late watering (within an hour of sunset) may encourage mildew and mold growth on certain susceptible plants but, believe me, dehydration is far more damaging.

What happens if I take a vacation? Take a vacation? Do your plants get a vacation? No. So you should take a vacation?! Wait till October or November!! But seriously, vacations can be an issue. That's why when we plant we add these special gels to the planting site to act as an emergency reservoir of water for your plants. If you are watering regularly, taking a one-week hiatus from watering should not be a problem. Longer than that, see if a neighbor or a friend or even a relative can water your plants for you. If you don't water regularly then these gels will have already been tapped dry by your plants and as such will be of no use during your hiatus.

Remember we can't be responsible for Acts of Nature (i.e. floods, lightening, hurricanes, tornadoes, severe windstorms etc... I guess I now need to add earthquakes!?), abuse [running over the plant with your feet or (shudder!) a lawnmower], or neglect. Failure to water is one form of neglect.

Don't Neglect your plants, and water, water, water them. Your plants will thank you!