



Caring for a New Tree

Planting

The ideal time to plant a new tree is in early spring or late fall when there is plenty of rainfall to help the tree establish new roots before leaf growth begins. However, with proper care and lots of water, a tree can be planted at any time during the growing season.

Watering

New trees require regular watering for at least two years. A good guide is two large buckets of water poured slowly over the root ball at least once a week (letting a garden hose dribble for an hour is another way to do this). When the soil is dry below the mulch, it is time to water. All trees benefit from watering during an extended drought. Property owners are responsible for watering the trees planted by the City Parks Department on their boulevard.

Mulching

Mulching helps trees conserve moisture, moderates soil temperature and protects against competition from grass and weeds. Apply a 10 centimeter layer of leaf mould, compost, wood chips or other mulch over the root ball once the soil is warm. Reserve a mulch-free area, 3 to 5 centimeters wide at the base of the tree, to avoid moisture damage to the bark.

Fertilizing

Fertilizing a tree at the time of planting is not recommended. Above all, do not use a general purpose fertilizer (i.e., 20-20-20) as the high nitrogen level (the first number) can burn new root growth. A mulch of compost applied annually is more than sufficient to ensure healthy tree growth.

Staking

Staking is needed only if lawn mower damage, vandalism, or windy conditions are a concern. Most trees establish more quickly and develop stronger trunk and root systems if they are not staked at the time of planting. Staking and ties should generally be removed after the first year of growth.

Protecting from Damage

Lawn mowers and grass trimmers can damage the bark of young trees. The Parks Department usually protects new trees with plastic trunk guards. Remove these before they get tight so as not to restrict trunk growth. Planting flowers around the base of a tree can protect against lawn mower damage but take care to avoid root damage as the active roots of most trees are very near the surface. Do not pave over tree roots.

Pruning

Do not prune a newly planted tree in its first year unless there is breakage or other obvious damage that needs repair. Never top a tree. Though still common practice, topping causes significant stress and unhealthy growth that can lead to further problems. As the tree matures, consult a certified arborist before pruning (to find an International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist, go to the treesaregood.com website and click on the "find a tree care service" tab).

Some Helpful Websites

<http://www.arborday.org/> (USA)

<http://www.treesaregood.com/> International Society of Arboriculture

<http://www.treelink.org/> (Urban Forestry Portal - USA)

<http://www.toronto.ca/trees/> (Canada - Ont)

http://www.treecanada.ca/index_e.htm (Canada)

<http://www.city.kelowna.bc.ca/CM/Page940.aspx> (Canada - BC)

<http://www.hctf.ca/nature.htm> (Canada - BC)