



## CARING FOR NEW TREES

The sun is shining and the temperatures are warming up leading many to work in gardens and think about planting trees and shrubs. Time is taken to research the right type of tree, but, once it's planted, how much is really known about its proper care providing the best chance of it maturing and giving enjoyment for years to come? The Westerville Shade Tree Commission offers some helpful hints to assist in proper water management for trees.

Watering a brand new tree twice a week should be sufficient during the most severe dry weather. Look for signs of over watering and under watering. In both cases the leaves begin to wilt. A newly planted tree needs 10 gallons of water per diameter inch of the tree. If a regular watering schedule is being followed and the leaves wilt it is most likely over watering and the opposite when not watering regularly. For residents who have irrigations systems, check with the installer to determine if there are special provision to target watering trees. If there is not, remember to water trees regularly.

A good watering program saturates the root zone at the time of watering and then allows it to dry out over a few days. Frequent surface watering causes roots to grow near the surface which increases their susceptibility to drought in the future. One method to watering trees deeply is to place a garden hose at the base of the tree and turn it on a slow trickle for a few hours. Another is to drill a few small holes in the bottom of a five gallon bucket and fill it up. This allows the water to slowly drain out and go directly to the roots as opposed to running off. Watering bags are available for purchase from local nurseries and hardware stores, these work well using the bucket type of method.

Mulching is another way to help trees retain moisture. Mulch should be between two and three inches in depth and as wide as the root zone of the tree. Care should be taken to make sure mulch at the base of the is pulled back so that no mulch is on the trees trunk. If this is not done, it can lead to insect and disease issues as well as future structural problems. When done properly there will be what looks like a bowl dug out in the mulch directly adjacent to the tree. Volcano mulching, or piling the mulch up high on the trunk of the tree should never be done as it leads to the same insect, disease and structural problems.

Caring for seedlings is similar. One way to help very small seedlings survive is to plant them in pots and place them in a shaded environment in the yard, giving the ability for a little extra care. Container planting requires daily watering because the soil in containers dries out very rapidly. Remember that deer, rabbits and other critters often enjoy the taste of a young seedling so, if possible, place them somewhere difficult to get to.

The Shade Tree Commission meets the second Wednesday of each month. Meetings are open for citizens to attend. Information on the Commission can be found at [www.westerville.org/parks](http://www.westerville.org/parks). Residents can also call the Parks and Urban Forestry Manager at (614) 901-6598 or email [matthew.ulrey@westerville.org](mailto:matthew.ulrey@westerville.org).