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Caring for your Landscape Plants

Watering Evergreen Trees and Shrubs

It is very important to thoroughly water newly planted trees and shrubs but especially evergreens. Their foliage is made primarily of water. Drying winter winds can create winter burn, or dry out the foliage and turn it brown. To prevent this, water the ground around evergreens thoroughly in November and prepare it for the upcoming winter months.

Watering Deciduous Trees

Tree roots may be two to three times wider than the height of the actual plant. Also, the critical water absorbing roots are in the first 18" of the ground. This is very important to know when watering your trees. They need their 1" of water not just at the trunk but around the entire critical root zone. A general rule of thumb is to apply ten gallons of water for each diameter inch of the tree trunk. For example, if you have a 2 1/2" tree trunk, you need to give the tree 25 gallons of water. It is more beneficial to water plantings by soaking once a week than frequent light waterings. It is also best to water in the cool morning temperatures than the hot afternoon.

Watering Deciduous Shrubs

All of the same watering rules apply to shrubs as they do to trees. However, the best method of watering many shrubs close together is with sprinklers or soaker hoses. Allow them to run until the soil is nearly saturated. This is the most efficient method and not only waters the shrubs but also the surrounding soil.

Perennials

Perennials do not need nearly as much water in volume as trees and shrubs. However, they tend to dry out faster and need more frequent waterings. Soft spray water wands, sprinklers, and irrigation systems are all good methods to water your flowers. Monitor the sprinkler and irrigation systems to make sure they do not miss any plants in the garden. It is hard to overwater perennials that are in the ground. **The most important thing to remember is that you should always feel the soil about 2" below the surface before you water.** If it is dry, water; and if it is wet, do not water. Also, full sun perennials will need more water than the perennials that are in the shade. After the first year, perennials

will not need watering as frequently, but it is still recommended in the hot, dry months of summer.

Mulch

It is always a good idea to add up to 3" of mulch, either organic or inorganic, around your landscape plants. Examples of organic mulch include shredded bark, cocoa shells, pine needles and shredded leaves. Inorganic mulches include stones, crushed gravel, and pebbles. These mulches will help retain water in the ground, keep soil temperatures cooler, and reduce the amount of weeds. They will also greatly improve the appearance of your landscape.

Fertilization

Trees need to be fertilized every few years. Shrubs and perennials can be fertilized yearly. Soil tests can determine what nutrients are lacking and help you to decide what fertilizer to apply.

Pruning Trees and Shrubs

Trees and shrubs are constantly growing. To keep them looking their best and not overgrown, it is best to prune them yearly. With regular pruning, foundation shrubs can look beautiful for 20 years before they become too large and big stemmed. Without pruning, this can happen in 3-5 years. It is important to know the proper way to prune your specific plants before you start. Should you make a mistake though, the next year of growth will provide you with a second chance. Also, pruning tools should always be clean and sharp to prevent an infection from forming and spreading through your plants. If you are uncomfortable pruning your plants yourself, K&B has many experienced professionals willing to take on the task.

Winterizing Your Plants

After a few cold frosts, it is time to start preparing plants for winter. Most perennials should be trimmed back at this time. This not only saves time on maintenance in the spring, but prevents diseases that the foliage may have from reappearing in the spring. Nice perennials to leave intact all winter are ornamental grasses. They catch the snow and become a great winter interest. However, they would need to be cut back no later than the spring because they could rot from the melted snow.