



General Plant Care > Maintenance > Watering

TREES & SHRUBS

Allow trees and shrubs to grow in their natural shape unless you are creating an intentional hedge or prefer a “poodled” look. If a branch is growing in the way of a path or patio, prune it back to where it joins a larger stem. Prune newly planted trees *as little as possible*: remove only dead, broken, or rubbing branches and the weaker of a double leader, if present. Wait one full year before pruning. Prune the tree gradually over the next 3-5 years to maintain the health of the tree. Evergreen trees and conifers, in most cases, do not require much pruning. Avoid removing the lower limbs of trees/conifers, such as pines, spruces, firs, and others with a natural pyramidal shape. They look most natural when allowed to branch to the ground. Trim only the candles of pines to keep their shape. Flowering shrubs that bear flowers in spring on wood from the preceding year should be pruned at the end of the flowering season. Deadhead any spent blooms. Woody plants that produce flowers later in the growing season on the current season’s growth, can be pruned in late winter or early spring without sacrificing the blooms. Many deciduous plants can also be pruned midsummer, after the spring growth. Fertilizer needs vary depending on the tree and shrub. Many plants grow well here in the Pacific Northwest without supplemental nutrients. If the plant is doing well and has strong growth each year, there is little need for additional fertilizer. If plant growth is scant, pale, or weak, fertilizer may be needed.

PERENNIALS & GRASSES

We feel it is best to maintain with a light hand. Fallen leaves and spent flower head stalks provide food and habitat for pollinators and birds. Let dormant grasses and seed heads remain through the winter. Cut back unsightly dead growth in early spring, just as new growth is emerging. Cut perennials back to the ground in late fall when they have entered dormancy. Apply a pet-friendly slug bait (Sluggo) to help prevent slug and snail damage for those perennials prone to consumption.

WEEDS

Plan to weed 1x/month. Weeds will grow fastest in spring. Pull them when or before they are in flower since shortly thereafter they will go to seed and “spread like weeds.” As the landscape matures weeds will have less opportunity to establish but some weed seeds will always be present in the environment. Mulching will help keep weeds down and make them easier to pull.

MULCH

A healthy layer of mulch will suppress weeds, conserve soil moisture, protect plant roots from extremes of heat and cold, decrease soil compaction, and provide a source of organic matter for soil organisms. Over time, the mulch will break down and become incorporated into the soil. reapply a 2-3" top-dressing of mulch as needed, usually once a year. Before applying mulch, clear away existing weeds. Apply organic mulches 2-3" thick around plants, taking care not to cover the crown of the plant, as too much moisture near the crown can cause rot. Bark may be used as mulch after the plants are established in 2-3 years. Until then, use compost mulch to continue to build soil health.

WATERING & IRRIGATION

Water wisely. Reduce runoff by watering the roots of the plant, not the foliage, and apply compost or mulch on a yearly basis. Water early in the day when temperatures are low to avoid evaporation loss. We want to ensure that plants have sufficient moisture near the root zone in order to withstand hot temperatures. Newly planted trees and shrubs require water 2-3x/week for the first month. Thereafter, irrigate weekly during their first two years of growth. Established trees and shrubs (after two years) only need to be watered 1x/every 2 weeks when rain is scarce. It all depends on the weather so keep an eye out for dry spells. Although we experience more rain in our climate, short periods of rain seldom penetrate the soil deep enough for roots, especially when planted under a tree canopy. Plan to water semi-regularly for the first few years. plants will look a lot nicer and appreciate additional water, especially through the hottest summer (July-August-September) weeks.

CreekScape Design, LLC
www.creeksapedesign.com LCB#8718