



The Professional Landscape & Nursery Trades

**Education (From Planter Edition 7-2016)**

by Jason Moore

**When to Water and How Much to Save Your Installations  
From Warranty Replacement**

I found this old machine-typed, yellowing paper with watering information in the archives here at Horticultural Associates. Based on the phone calls we have been getting from some of our landscapers, this could be very helpful for protecting your installations and hopefully saving you from some warranty replacements. I added a few notes based on some modern technology we have now, but for the most part everything else is spot on. Hope this article is helpful.

Watering is one of the most important steps in making your new planting successful. Ninety percent of plantings die because of incorrect watering practices. Please remember that the information listed below is rule of thumb and there are some plants that will not fall exactly under these guidelines.

**Foundation plants and smaller plants:**

Water with hose pressure running at a moderate stream. Hold hose over plant and move around over the top of the plant. Water until the ground is saturated or water is running away from the plant. Water in this fashion across the entire landscape until the end and then start the process again. Remember that it is very important that the water penetrate the soil and get down to the root area of the plant.

*\*Since this article was originally published, there are lots of new devices like tree bag waterers and you can never go wrong with a great irrigation system which is also a great add on sale. (We have some great members that do irrigation and our Secretary John Spalty works for Atlantic Irrigation if you want information on irrigation)- If you have a lot of 5 pound buckets, you can drill a small hole on the bottom and fill them with water and it will drip out onto the plants. Another tip, although not practical, with a large planting, but you can put ice over the plants and it will slowly seep in while it melts. This is how we water plants at trade shows. -Jason Moore*

**Trees and Evergreens:**

Use a 5-gallon bucket and provide measured water in the following quantities:

Evergreen 4' or smaller	10 gallons
Tree 1 3/4 " caliper	10 gallons
Evergreens 5-8'	15-20 gallons
Tree 2-3" caliper	15-20 gallons
Evergreens 8-10'	20-25 gallons
Tree 3-5'	20-25 gallons

### **Watering Schedule:**

Water regularly March-December. Please remember that it is the temperature, not the month that controls watering schedules. When temperatures hit 60 degrees or less, water 1 time per week. When temperatures hit 65-80 degrees, water 2 times per week. When temperatures hit 85 or above, water every other day. Please note that wind and sun also play a part in your watering schedule. Plants in hot, open areas need more water than plants in shade. Water regularly through draught conditions. In severe draught conditions, it is a good idea to water established plants, as well.

- If in doubt about soil moisture, carefully check 2-3 inches into soil. If very moist, there is enough water near the root area.
- If foliage of plant is wilting or crisp, it needs water immediately. Crispy foliage is a result of not enough water. The plant will allow the outside of the leaf to die to reduce the amount of water needed. Although this is not attractive, the plant will usually not die from this if given immediate attention.
- If a plant has had too much water, the leaves will grow spongy looking and soft. If this happens, stop watering until the root area dries out.
- Keep in mind that the amount of water is also controlled by your soil conditions. Use your best judgment when making decisions about your watering. For example, sandy soils will drain and dry out faster than soils with a high amount of clay.

### **Transplant Shock:**

All plants go through transplant shock. How the plant reacts to it is just as different as the plants are from each other. This shock is the stress the plant experiences while re-establishing in a new location. Remember that the plant is adapting to a new soil, light exposure, and temperature in the new environment in which it is now planted. The stress can last from a few months to a couple of years depending on the size and variety of the plant.

- Flowering Shrubs: foliage may be smaller than normal and off color for 3-6
- Dwarf evergreens: foliage may be off color and growth rate may be slower than normal for the first 6-12 months. Some of the evergreens such as arborvitae will shed more than normal for the first 2 years during August to December.
- Broadleaf evergreens: the foliage will be off color and shedding may be up to double what it would be normally. These plants are rhododendrons, azaleas, and holly.
- Shade and ornamental trees: leaves can be 1/3 the normal size and not as dense as the tree should look. Actual growth could be 1/3 of normal. These plants would be Maples, Oaks, Flowering Crabapples, and Weeping Cherries.
- Large evergreens: growth will be 1/4-1/3 the normal rate for up to the first 2 years. They may shed twice as much during the same time period and leaf color could be off. These symptoms could last up to 2 years. Some examples of these plants would be Blue Spruce, Austrian Pine, and since the roots maintain plant growth and flowering cycles, the plant will remain in an altered growth pattern until the roots have re-developed.

*\*While not available for all plant types, properly grown container nursery stock (not root-bound) has the lowest amount of stress to the plant as you are not cutting the roots. Just remember that the soil mix the growers use to grow the plants is extremely rich in nutrients and fertilizer and the plants are under a strict drip or other irrigation schedule. That is not going to be the case once planted. - Jason Moore*