



University of California / Agriculture and
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Drought Care for Trees

As the drought continues, our urban forest is in need of extra care. Here are some things you should know and simple ways to care for your trees while saving water.

Know Your Watering Rules

Each city may have different rules for outdoor watering. Be sure you know which days of the week you can water your trees.

Add Mulch Around Your Trees

- Natural, wood chip mulch is one of the best ways to save water and can keep your trees healthy. A thick layer of mulch on top of the soil around your tree will keep moisture in the soil and protect the roots from extreme temperatures, so you use less water and your trees stay happy!
- Keep mulch 4 inches away from the trunk, spread it 4 feet in diameter (or out to the drip line if possible), and pile it 6 inches deep.

Check the Soil

How do you know if it's time to water your tree? *Check the soil!*

- Use a small shovel or screwdriver to check the soil 6-8 inches below the surface near the drip line.
- If the soil feels dry and crumbly, it's time to water your tree with a slow soak. If the soil feels sticky or wet, let it dry for a couple days before checking it again.

Water Responsibly With a Slow Soak

Water needs to reach the roots of your tree, which are located 12-28 inches below the surface. Because the root zone extends as a tree grows, young trees and mature trees need different watering techniques.

Watering Young Trees (1-5 years after planting)

The roots of a young tree are mostly located near the trunk and grow 12-18 inches below the surface.

A young tree needs 10-15 gallons of water per week. Slowly soak the area near the base of the tree 2-3 times per week with 5 gallons each time.

You can use:

- A hose on a slow trickle
- A soaker hose
- The bucket method --
- Collect water in a bucket while your shower warms up.
- Drill a small hole (1/8") near the bottom of a second bucket and place it near the trunk of your young tree.
- Fill second bucket with the shower water you saved. The water will slowly drip into the soil and keep your tree healthy.



Your young tree only needs 10-15 gallons of water per week. That's the same amount of water used in a 6 minute shower!

Watering Mature Trees (5+ years after planting)

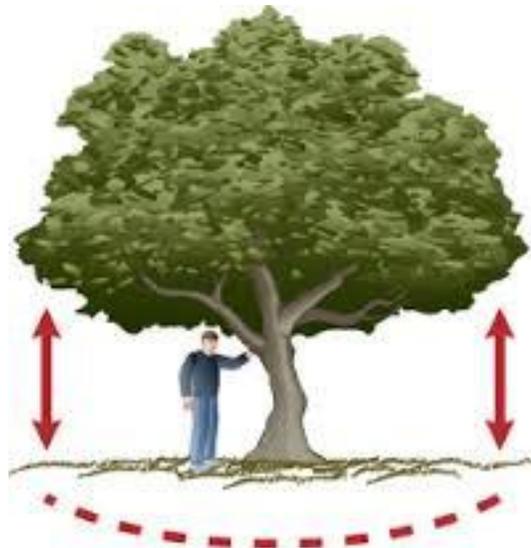
The roots of a mature tree extend underground even wider than the branches extend above ground. Adding water near the trunk of a mature tree will **not** reach the roots.

Slowly soak the area throughout the root zone for several hours to reach the roots 12-18 inches below the surface.

You can use:

- A soaker hose beginning a few feet from the trunk and spiraled outward toward the drip line
- An oscillating sprinkler on a low setting moved to various locations through the root zone
- Drip emitters

Allow water to slowly drip into your soil for several hours.



Red dotted line is root zone

If your root zone extends under hardscape or beyond your property, slowly soak as much of the root zone as possible.

Special Note: Native trees like, valley oaks, which have never received regular irrigation may be harmed by adding extra water. Contact a certified arborist if you have questions about the health of your native or mature trees.

We thank the Sacramento Tree Foundation for this information. To learn more, please visit The Sacramento Tree Foundation for additional in-depth tree planting and watering guidance for our area. <http://www.sactree.com/pages/1>

Adapted for use by the UC Master Gardeners of Yolo County by Ann Trump Daniel-July 2015

Reviewed by Jennifer Baumbach, UC Master Gardener Program Coordinator.

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