



WATERING GUIDE

Over the next few months your newly planted trees will root out into the surrounding soil, eventually enabling them to thrive without any hand watering. During this establishment phase, however, they will be relying on you for support. It is therefore vital that you learn to water them correctly.

How to water

Watering newly planted trees is different to watering summer bedding. You've got to get the balance right: too little support and they will fail, too much and they will never become independent! The best approach is to give your trees occasional deep soakings, rather than daily light sprinkles. This encourages the roots to seek water as they sense the soil moisture gradually dropping. A particularly effective technique is to create a moisture gradient outwards from the stem. This is achieved by watering less near the stem of the tree, gradually becoming more generous as you move out over the rootball, then the backfill zone and finally out into the adjoining soil. Watering in this way will encourage the roots to 'chase' the moisture outwards as the soil gradually dries out nearer the stem.

How much water

One hour after watering, the soil at about 5 inches depth should feel moist, but should not drizzle water if squeezed gently in the hand. The amount of water you need to apply to achieve this level of moisture will depend on the size of your tree and your soil type. Rich organic soils act like sponges, light sandy soils are free draining and clay soils will hold water in the planting hole like a jar, yet incredibly difficult to rewet if allowed to dry out.

Our planting teams wrap a perforated pipe around the rootball of each tree they plant as a standard practice. These perforated, corrugated pipes you see protruding from the soil at the base of most trees are designed to allow you to water directly down to the deeper soil layers. This is particularly effective during times of drought when surface soil can be very hard. If your soil is clay or prone to waterlogging, we will sometimes install an inspection pipe as well. Made from the same material, this pipe is installed vertically alongside the rootball so you can check for standing water at the bottom using a stick—a bit like checking the oil in your car (except in this case you want the stick to come out dry!)

How often to water

Unfortunately there is no easy formula for determining how often your trees will need to be watered. Just as our water requirements vary dramatically depending on our physical condition, size, environment, and the weather, so too will theirs.

Fortunately, we can offer advice about how to interpret your tree's watering needs. Signs a tree needs watering are: wilting, followed by browning off or 'crispy' leaves and leaf drop in severe cases. Signs a tree has been watered too much are: yellowing leaves, rapid leaf drop, poor growth, spotting of the leaves. Underwatering is easier to correct than overwatering, if caught quickly, so frequent monitoring is important. Newly planted trees may need to be checked every couple of days in hot weather, and must be watered immediately at the first sign of stress. With good care in the first growing season, you may not need to water younger trees at all in the second, unless we have a prolonged period of drought. Trees with girth sizes in excess of 20cm will probably still need supplemental watering in the second season, but less frequently than the first. In both cases, do remember to keep an eye on your trees for any signs of dryness or stress for the first two growing seasons after planting. If you do still feel anxious about getting the watering right, tree gators are a great and inexpensive way to take the worry out of watering. These swim-ring type bags are designed to hold water around the base of the tree, slowly allowing it to seep out through tiny perforations over the course of several days. You would probably just need to fill your tree gator once per week in the summer months.