How to Care For Your New Tree

WATERING
Regular watering is the most important way to ensure the longevity and health of your tree!

Water once a week in the dry months and in between rain storms in the winter during the first three years. You may need to water more frequently in warmer weather.

Young trees require ten gallons of water once a week—that’s two five-gallon buckets or a low-pressure soak with the garden hose for an hour minutes. It is better for the health of the tree to water slowly and deeply rather than fast and frequent. This also encourages roots to go deeper rather than staying on the surface where they can do damage to sidewalks and curbs.

Keep the soil moist but not soaked. When the soil becomes dry below the surface of the mulch, it is time to water.

If you have heavy clay soil, your tree may need less water. Overwatering can drown and rot tree roots, causing leaves to turn yellow.

There is no single recipe for proper watering. Adjust your watering amount or schedule for what works for your tree health and soil type.

WEEDING & MULCHING
Keep the area around your tree free of weeds and grass. They compete with the tree for water and nutrients. Use a hand tool to remove grass and weeds within a 4-foot radius around the base of the tree. **Do not use a weedeater around your tree – this can be lethal!**
Wait at least a year before planting wildflowers, perennials or groundcover around the tree, and avoid planting woody plants (such as rosemary or lavender) around the tree.

Place mulch around the base of your tree to control weeds and conserve water. Mulch is an organic material that helps trees retain moisture, moderates soil temperature, minimizes the growth of weeds and grass, and nourishes the tree as it decomposes. Wood chips are most commonly used. Apply mulch 2-4 inches deep, and extend 18-24 inches in each direction. **Do not pile mulch against the trunk of the tree. It can cause trunk rot and tree death.**

Free wood chips can often be obtained at various locations around the city, and/or purchased at stores that sell plants.

Contact [info@richmondtrees.org](mailto:info@richmondtrees.org) to find out where you can get free mulch.
FERTILIZER
Do not use fertilizer to feed your tree. It can attract aphids and other tree pests. If you want to feed your tree, use good quality compost once a year in the spring. Keep compost away from the base of the trunk by at least 6-8 inches.

INSECTS & PESTS
Street trees live in a harsh and stressful environment. They are surrounded by asphalt and concrete, and are subject to strong winds and heat. When trees are healthy, they are usually able to ward off fungus, insects, pests and disease. But when a tree becomes stressed, its health can be compromised.

Some of the most common pests are whiteflies, aphids, scale and sooty mold. Whiteflies are very small white insects that live on the underside of leaves. Aphids and scale produce a sticky, sweet substance that ants like to eat so the ants “milk” aphids and scale to extract the substance for food. You may notice ants running up and down the trunk of the tree to “farm” aphids or scale. Another sign of aphids or scale is sooty mold, which causes leaves to become black.

If you notice these pests on your tree, hose the tree and leaves with strong water pressure to remove the pests.

Sooty Mold
Scale Insects

Photo credit: Joseph O’Brien, USDA Forest Service

Photo courtesy WSU Whatcom County Extension
OTHER PROBLEMS
If you notice the edges of the tree leaves turning brown, this could be a sign of windburn, soil compaction and/or water not reaching the roots. Loosening the soil will allow water to flow more freely around the roots. You can use a spading fork, shovel or pick to loosen the soil. Be sure to water thoroughly afterwards.

PRUNING
_Don't prune your street tree!_ Young trees need all their foliage for the first few years to become established. It is important to leave the lower branches on a young tree. The tree may look more like a shrub, but those lower branches are providing much needed nutrients to the trunk of a young tree.

City staff and/or certified Richmond Trees Urban Foresters may do some structural pruning of your tree during the first three years. If your tree is older and needs pruning, call the City of Richmond Parks & Landscaping Division at 510-231-3001. If you want to hire an arborist to prune your tree, you need to obtain a permit from the Superintendent of Parks & Landscaping at the City of Richmond by calling 510-231-3001.

QUESTIONS
Contact the City of Richmond Parks & Landscaping Division at 510-231-3001 or email Richmond Trees at info@richmondtrees.org.

For more information:
- [www.treesaregood.org](http://www.treesaregood.org)
- [www.sbcatreecom](http://www.sbcatreecom)
- [www.californiareleaf.org](http://www.californiareleaf.org)