

Successful Tips for Summer Watering

By Jim Seiler

Around our home we have a mantra in the hot summer months and it goes something like this, water... water... water!!! Although there are various reasons why plant materials die, in most cases it comes down to two simple causes, either too much water or not enough water. By the time you see wilting of the foliage or flower, the plant is already under considerable stress. It needs to be watered immediately but the perfect time has been missed. If this scenario happens over and over again, your plant begins to decline and it will never be as healthy and beautiful as it could have been. Much like an athlete hydrates prior to a sport performance, a healthy plant needs thorough watering before the stress of intense sun and heat.

It is best to develop good watering habits and then adjust these practices to specific and changing weather and soil conditions. Early morning is the ideal time to water your lawns and plant materials for several reasons. The water you offer has a chance to soak deeply into the soil without moisture loss to evaporation. Water is also conserved most efficiently in the morning as mid-day heat and winds increase evaporation and carry water onto driveways, patios and other hardscapes resulting in considerable water waste. Though always preferable to not watering at all, evening watering may increase disease and fungal problems.

At Seiler's Landscaping we guarantee our plant material for a full year after installation. I will bet that you can guess the number one reason that we have to replace a plant... Failure to Water! The roots of newly planted trees and shrubs are initially confined to a root ball (balled and in burlap) or a root mass (container grown). These root balls or masses dry out very quickly and their moisture status must be checked frequently. Water should be applied slowly to the base of the plant and not just to the surrounding soil. As the root system begins to grow into the backfilled and surrounding soil, watering can be decreased and the watering area enlarged. Watering is usually required for 1 to 2 growing seasons. Large trees can require 3 to 4 growing seasons.

Finally, we recommend applying fresh mulch, shredded chips or bark around landscape plantings. It offers far more than an attractive finish to beds because it conserves soil moisture by reducing evaporation and limits weed competition. I suppose I should add a word or two on over watering but I do not see it nearly as often. Soil should not be in a consistent state of wetness or rotting will develop. Let the soil firm up and then re-water. Evergreens are particularly vulnerable to over watering. I regularly see beds that are over watered by irrigation systems that are left on the same watering cycle season after season. Your plants watering needs will change as they mature and adjustments must be made. Garden supply stores carry a gauge specifically designed to read soil moisture levels. It is a handy tool to keep available if you are feeling in doubt.

So remember these three tips... water sooner rather than later – water wisely to avoid waste and unless it has rained hard enough that the trunk of large trees are visibly wet, then you probably still need to water!

Happy planting and remember, green side up!!



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