

Watering to Protect your Green Investment

By Joe Covington

Our summer heat has come early this year and we've had much less rain than average this spring. This formula makes watering more critical than ever to keep our spring plantings in top shape. Newly planted trees and shrubs should be watered by hand every day (yes, every day!) for at least a month or until you are sure the soil is still wet the next day. Hand watering conserves water and also helps us not over water.

Established trees and shrubs have more mature root systems so they can go longer between waterings depending on their age, sun exposure and type of plant. These plants are so important to the value of your home and it only makes sense to protect your investment by ensuring they receive adequate water.

Now, let's talk about sprinkler systems. Don't assume that each sprinkler head is working properly and covering 100% of the area intended. Sprinkler timers won't "think" for you! Each day it's essential that you consistently monitor your plantings for the "dreaded droops" (leaves pointed downward, looking sad!) Check visually and also by scratching in to the soil 3-4 inches to determine moisture content.

Last, but not least, mulch 2-3 inches to reduce your watering needs and protect surface roots from drying out. Mulch makes landscapes look cleaner, dramatizes plantings, and holds down potential weed problems. Also, when installing new plants, "expanded shale" mixed with the backfill dirt will retain 35% of its weight in water and will "cut up" clay soil so moisture can penetrate more deeply, reducing watering needs and causing roots to grow deeper, further away from the hot soil surface.

There are no shortcuts to having a beautiful garden in Northeast Texas, but hey, if it was easy it wouldn't be so darn rewarding when a friend or neighbor comes over to your house and says, "Wow, this is beautiful!"

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