WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Landscape plants probably suffer more from moisture related problems than from any other cause of death. For them it is either feast or famine, flood or drought and air or suffocation. Water is a primary constituent in the photosynthetic production of organic matter. It is the solvent for nutrient and food transport within plants. Transpiration cools plants. Roots extend into soil and shoot tips grow only by absorption of water. But although water is vital to plants, excessive water is often responsible for their decline and death because too much water suffocates the roots by pushing out oxygen for this reason a proper water management program is essential to keep your Trees and Shrubs health.

Recent drought conditions throughout the country have created serious challenges for landscape plants and trees. Continuing lack of rain showers and high temperatures is sure to create even more hardships. When there is an adequate supply, water seeps down through the soil, gradually saturating each layer, shrubs and trees depend on water and moisture in the upper layers of soil. Usually the top six (6) to twelve (12) inches where the root systems is located.

Water Management and how You Can Do it:

Observe the Plants:

Most plants wilt noticeably when too little water is available. Leaves that were once shiny become dull and bright-green leaves fade or turn gray-green. Leaves fall early and young leaves sometimes die. If the plants have been given too much water, they will turn yellow and drop leaves.

The first signs of water stress in large shade trees is a flagging or wilting of foliage. It can be difficult to notice. Next the leaves become “scorched” as they gradually curl, become dry at the edges and begin to die. Eventually, trees will drop their leaves in an attempt to “save” themselves. It is important to remember that defoliated trees are weakened, but not dead. Many of these trees will survive.

Feel the Soil:

With experience, you can roughly estimate moisture adequacy by the feel of the soil. To estimate moisture adequacy, roll or squeeze a small sample of soil into a ball. If the soil will not mold into a ball, it is too dry to supply adequate water to plants. If the ball formed will not crumble when rubbed, the soil is too wet. If the soil can be molded into a ball that will crumble when rubbed, the moisture content is correct. Sandy soils, however, will crumble even when wet.

What You Can Do:

Water trees at least once a week for approximately one (1) hour. This will provide the tree(s) with a good deep watering. This is much more beneficial for the trees than frequent small amounts of water. Plants should be watered every 2-3 days, barring rain and more frequently

during hot weather. Continue until mid Fall and then taper off, as this is the time for plants and trees to stop growing and harden for the Winter.

Remember, if you water in too shallow a manner, the plants roots will turn upwards in search for the lightly sprinkled water. When the soil dries, the new shallow roots will be killed more readily.

A water management plan should be followed for two (2) years or until the plants are established.