LANDSCAPE CARE GUIDE

Landscape Architecture & Design

Landscape Installation & Maintenance

Irrigation

Outdoor Kitchens

Arbors

Retaining Walls

Patios & Walkways

Fire Pits and Fireplaces

Custom Fountains & Water Features

Synthetic Turf

GARDEN DESIGN

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General Care

- Do not use a grass bagger for the first year. It is important to return the clippings to the turf as compost.
- Newly planted lawns will have weeds. They may come from existing soil or weed seeds may travel into your yard. To eliminate weeds, mow frequently. Use a pre-emergent weed prevention product at the appropriate times for your area. DO NOT APPLY PRE-EMERGENT FOR THE FIRST YEAR ON YOUR NEW LAWN.
- After a new lawn is installed, wait three weeks, then fertilize with a balanced fertilizer. Fertilizer should occur once a month from mid-April through mid-September.
- Landscaping is not a one time job. Landscapes need to be inspected once per week.
- Do not over water. Overwatering is just as lethal to a tree and plants as under-watering. (See watering guide)
- Always monitor your newly installed landscape – soil types, weather and sun exposure vary with each property and will effect the water needed for a landscape.
- New sod and plants should be watered daily for the first 14 days.
- Sprinkler systems do not water trees adequately. Trees should be deep watered by a hose daily for the first 14 days, then every five to seven days, depending on weather conditions.
- To establish a deep root system for all trees and plants, water should deep soak the ground. Light watering keeps the top wet and does not encourage the roots to grow deep.
- Root balls should be allowed to slightly dry between watering to prevent root rot and allow oxygen to draw into the soil.
- Mulch helps to reduce evaporation and to suppress weeds that will compete with your plants for the same water.
- Low humidity, wind, and bright, sunny days will increase the need to water.

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Bed Preparation

Compost is a soil additive, not to be confused with soil replacement. When compost is purchased, we rototill it into the existing soil to create a better growing medium for your plants. Rototilling only occurs 4" - 6" deep and does not involve excavation of the existing soil. This process breaks up and loosens the existing clay soil, allowing root systems to easily penetrate the area surrounding the root ball of a plant. When you dig into the soil you may not see the compost, but it is there making your soil a better conductor of oxygen, water, and nutrients.

The process of rototilling and sprinkler system installation may bring large building materials to the surface. These materials are removed when our crews prepare the beds for installation of plant material. Small building materials, such as mortar, brick chips, small rocks, etc. will remain. After the landscape is installed and your beds begin the natural process of settling, additional materials may become evident, due to irrigation and rainfall. We are not responsible for the removal of this debris as it continues to surface.

After beds are installed, pull weeds as they appear and before they produce seed. The best weed prevention is a good layer of mulch. Do not spray a herbicide in a bed area without proper instructions. Even a small amount of wind drift while spraying can kill entire beds! Apply pre-emergent weed killer according to the manufacturer. Cultivate mulch into existing beds once per year and re-mulch with a two to three inch layer of new mulch. This will help prevent weeds and retain moisture.

Prune shrubs three to five times per year as needed. Frequent, light pruning is less stressful and will result in more uniform growth. Trim any dead growth first. Next, cut any branches that are rubbing together. Then, trim some of the branches of the plant so that sunlight and air can reach the center of the plant. Finally, shape the plant to achieve the desired look.

Fertilization

Do not fertilize the first year. Instead, use a root stimulator to promote growth. A tree needs to establish a healthy root system so that it can support a full canopy. Apply a root stimulator once per month starting the first month after planting. After landscape materials have been planted, the customer should apply 3 applications of root stimulator at two week intervals. A water-soluble fertilizer should be applied once a month throughout the growing season. A granular fertilizer should not applied until the second growing season. Granular fertilizers are the easiest to apply; they require less frequency of applications and are longer lasting. However, it is more likely to burn the plant material.

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Established Tree Fertilization:

Established trees should be fertilized four times a year as follows:

1st: 2-3 weeks before the spring buds appear
2nd: 6-8 weeks later after the trees have finished their first spring flush
3rd: 6-8 weeks later
4th: Early to mid-September (Reduce the amount of fertilizer by half)

When Should You Water?

It is recommended that you water early in the morning or in the early evening. Avoid watering between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Watering during the middle of the day prevents water from being absorbed properly due to evaporation. Watering late in the evening can cause plants and lawns to remain wet for too long and cause disease and fungus.

How to Know if You are Watering Properly?

Most plants can withstand short periods of drought without significant damage after the initial first two weeks of daily watering. The same is not true for their ability to withstand excessive water for extended periods of time. Standing water can cause drowning due to oxygen depletion and poor drainage can cause root decay and root rot diseases. The best way to confirm a tree, plant or sod is being watered properly is by checking the soil.

Signs of Under Watering

- Soil is dry.
- Older leaves turn yellow or brown and may even drop off.
- Leaves are wilted and/or curled.
- Grass doesn't spring back after being stepped on.
- It is difficult to push a screwdriver into the soil.
- Turf feels warm even in the evening after the sun goes down.
- Brown patches appear in the turf.

Signs of Overwatering

- Soil is constantly damp, soggy or puddles in areas.
- Young leaves become light green or yellow.
- Young shoots are wilted.
- Leaves are green yet brittle.
- Algae and mushrooms are growing.
- Soil is extremely soft and mushy.

For detailed watering guidelines, see General Watering Guide.

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Trees

You can check soil moisture by using a screwdriver and inserting it into the ground to a depth of 6" to 8" and then move it back and forth to create a small narrow trench. Then use your finger to touch the soil. The soil should be cool and slightly moist but not soaking wet. If it is moist to the touch, then the tree does not need water. If soaking wet, reduce watering. If dry, add watering time or adjust method of watering.

You should be able to press most non-sandy soils into a ball and it stay together. If the soil ball falls apart, then the soil may not have sufficient moisture. Clay soil will not need watering as frequently as a sandy soil since clay soils drain slowly and sandy soils drain quickly.

If the ball you make will not crumble when rubbed, you either have a clay soil or the soil is too wet to crumble when rubbed. This is an indication of too much water, so watering should be stopped. Sand and clay soils are not a good tree growing medium in the landscape although many species have naturally adapted to these soils.

Small Trees and Shrubs

Newly planted shrubs should also be watered thoroughly about once a week. Basins work well around individual shrubs.

Plants with large leaves (hydrangea, rhododendron) or with shallow root systems (azalea, dogwood) are usually the first to suffer during drought periods. Shrubs under large trees are especially susceptible because of the large volumes of water taken up by tree roots.

Wetting the soil to 6" deep requires 1" - 2" of surface water (will vary with soil type, compaction, and slope). You can check soil moisture by using a screwdriver and inserting it into the ground to a depth of 6" to 8", then move it back and forth to create a small narrow trench.

Annuals & Perennials

As a rule of thumb, flowering annuals do not like to get too dry. Water droplets can act like mini-magnifying glasses and burn your plant so it is a good idea to deeply water the soil and not the leaves. Wet leaves can lead to an increased chance of fungus, mildew and other diseases.

Ground Cover

Ground covers, though they do require less maintenance than grasses, require a certain amount of attention.

Ground covers should be watered with sprinklers in the same manner as lawns, or the garden hose may be placed in the bed and allowed to run slowly for several hours. Daily sprinklings can cause the root system to form on the surface of the ground, leaving the plant susceptible to drought. Watering in the evening is not a good idea because the plants do not have sufficient time to dry before dark, thus creating conditions favorable to the growth of fungus.

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Sod

Correct watering after installing the sod is critical to its survival. The idea is to keep the soil under the sod moist as well as the soil that comes with each sod piece. This does not mean constantly having a wet and soggy lawn.

Daily watering is required for the first 14 days after installation. After the first 14 days, usually 1" of water every two to three days applied in the early part of the day will be sufficient to keep the soil moist. Watering twice a day on the watering days may be required during extreme heat conditions.

Measure 1" of water by placing several straight sided coffee or tuna cans in the sprinkler output pattern. Check on the moisture conditions from time to time by lifting the corners of the sod pieces. If the sod/soil seems excessively wet by the second day then delay watering until the third day. Water only as frequently as necessary to keep the soil/sod moist, not soggy and wet. It is most important that you do not overwater and avoid saturating the sod/soil since this will prevent the sod from re-rooting and cause the roots to rot.

After the sod has rooted to the soil (from two to three weeks), it is important to change the watering schedule. Watering should be done thoroughly to soak the root zone (top 4" - 5" of soil) but infrequently. Providing 1" of supplemental irrigation every four to seven days (depending on soil, temperatures and rainfall) should be adequate for most lawns. There is rarely a need for daily watering of a sod lawn after the initial 14 days.

Water-Efficient Landscape Suggestions

- Most native and adapted plants to Texas require less water and fertilizers, have fewer pest problems and most importantly, survive during extreme temperatures.
- Control weeds by using mulch to allow water and air to circulate in the root zone.
- Fertilization affects the tolerance of plants to dry weather. Recently or heavily fertilized plants promote growth and require more water.
- Avoid sprinkling tree and shrub leaves with water. Salts in the water can damage the foliage and act as a magnifying glass for the sun.
- If trees or shrubs are planted in turf, water them separately at the drip line.
- If you water by hand, install a faucet timer and use a soaker hose.
- Expand the watering area as the plants grow to ensure deep root systems.
- Prevent runoff by retaining water in a basin around the plant or tree or water at a slower rate.
- Severe pruning results in vigorous, tender growth that is more dependent on consistent watering.
- Watering in the early morning will be most efficient because of less wind and heat.

Please note that this information is a general guideline and are meant to be an aide in keeping your landscape beautiful and healthy.