



# Client Watering Guide

One of the most important yet overlooked aspects of growing and maintaining your new plants is the watering process. This guide will assist you in making smart watering decisions to protect and beautify your investment. Additionally, following these instructions carefully is essential to maintain your plant warranty. Please be aware however that turf seed applications and sod installations are not warranted. (Refer to the Proposal Terms and Conditions for details).

## Concerning New Nursery Stock

**General guidelines:** Water early in the morning. The foliage will be able to dry early on and the ground will be cool. Avoid wetting the foliage when possible. Excessively wetting the foliage can promote disease. This is best accomplished with soaker hoses or drip-line irrigation systems placed over the root zone of the plant with the use of an inline timer. Do not water in the late evening or nighttime. Evening brings warm soil, which when combined with excess moisture can allow fungus to thrive.

- Water only when necessary: use wet soil depth measurements so you only water when necessary.
- Automatic timers help; but watch the weather for rain. A rain sensor with a timer is most helpful. Remember to change timer with seasons.
- Grass and annual flower roots are concentrated in the top 6" of soil.
- Perennial and shrub roots are concentrated in the top 12" of soil.
- Tree roots are concentrated in the top 12" of soil.

For the first two weeks, water three times per week. For the next four weeks, reduce this to twice per week. During hot or dry periods, water twice as often. Allow the soil to dry out between watering, and be sure to include forecasted rainfall in your decision making, as there is no need to water heavily when there is adequate rainfall. Plants that reside in over-saturated soil have their moisture and nutrient uptake compromised which can cause the root system or stems to rot and fungi to thrive, both of which will kill the plant.

**Trees:** Use a soaker hose or a standard hose under low pressure for watering so that water penetrates the soil and reaches the root system. High pressure watering will result in excess runoff and will not be effectively absorbed into the soil. Water until there are puddles that form AWAY from the trunk, near the drip line of the leaf canopy. It usually takes about 20 to 30 minutes per tree to achieve the proper watering depth, depending upon tree size. This will encourage the tree to develop a deep root system which, over time, will allow for greater drought tolerance. Drip watering bags can also be used, and should be refilled every 3 days. Stop watering deciduous trees after they drop their leaves in the fall. Evergreens such as spruce and pines should be watered until the first hard frost.

**Shrubs:** Use a soaker hose or a standard hose under low pressure so that water penetrates the soil and reaches the root system. High pressure watering will result in excess runoff and will not be effectively absorbed into the soil. Water until there are puddles that form AWAY from the stems, near the drip line of the leaf canopy. It usually takes about 10 minutes per shrub to achieve the proper watering depth, depending upon shrub size. Drip watering bags can also be used, and should be refilled every 3 days. Stop watering deciduous shrubs after they drop their leaves in the fall. Evergreens such as yews, boxwoods, and arborvitae should be watered until the first hard frost.

**Perennials and Annuals:** Water by hand with a wand or by using a soaker hose enough to thoroughly wet the topsoil around each plant as well as the adjacent area. Avoid foliage and flowers, watering until the water starts to pool. Do not allow more than two days to pass without watering perennials for the first six weeks after they have been planted, or for the entire growing season after any annuals have been planted. Container watering is uniquely different from gardens. Water daily, especially during hot spells. Pots hold heat and dry faster than garden soil. It's time for watering when the soil is dry a couple of inches down into the soil.

## Concerning Turf

**General guidelines:** Failures in new turf establishment are due to improper watering techniques more than any other factor. Water heavily after the initial installation, saturating the soil to a depth of 5-6". You can test this by putting a screwdriver into the soil; if it easily penetrates 5-6" into the soil, you have watered properly. Then, water daily for the next five weeks except on days when there is rainfall. You may need to purchase hoses, sprinklers, and timers to effectively achieve this.

**Seed applications:** Follow the instructions above. Grass seeding success depends on watering, the soil conditions, and the sprinkler setup. In general, ten minutes of watering each session (early morning and evening not night) keeps the top 2 inches of soil moist but not soggy. Clay soil can be watered less frequently than sandy soil. Sand drains more quickly than clay. Warm weather and darkness contribute to mildew and fungus growth.

Turf seed typically germinates in a 10-28 day window. Letting the soil dry out during this time period will kill the tender seeds and seedlings. Stop watering as soon as you start to see standing water on the surface as this may wash away or compromise the seed, fertilizers, herbicides and soil. The amount of water will vary based on your site's specific soil composition. After five weeks, the turf should be somewhat established, and you can decrease watering to the equivalent of a 1-2" rainfall per week. Use a rain gauge to measure this. Now allow the soil to dry out between watering, inhibiting disease and fungal issues, and to keep weed competition to a minimum. Over-seeding, slit seeding, a light topdressing of soil, fertilization, selective herbicide applications, and 2-3 growing seasons are all necessary to achieve the look most clients desire. Contact your representative for these additional services which are not included as a part of the initial installation.

Note for seeding: It is important that you immediately notify your maintenance provider (mowing, lawn fertilization, etc.) of your seed installation to reduce the damage that can be caused by ill-timed product applications or mowing equipment being used on tender seedlings and saturated soils. We recommend you wait as long as possible before mowing so your turf seed has a legitimate chance to establish. You may want to trim down or hand-remove any weeds that reach an unsightly height during this time. Inevitably, weeds WILL appear in seeded applications. Once the turf is established, it can more effectively out-compete weeds and handle herbicide applications.

**Sod installation:** Water enough so that the topsoil underneath the sod is saturated (check this by carefully lifting up a corner of the sod). Water heavily until the sod "roots" into the topsoil below. Carefully pull up a corner of the sod, and if it lifts easily, it has not rooted in. After it has rooted in, it will gently resist this process. If you are not watering enough, you will notice a darkening of the sod first, followed by an odor similar to that of "wet hay", then a yellowing in color. Increase watering in these areas and it will likely recover quickly. Once the sod has taken root, you can decrease watering to the equivalent of a 1-2" rainfall per week. Use a rain gauge to measure this.

Note for sod: It is important that you immediately notify your maintenance provider (mowing, lawn fertilization, etc.) of your sod installation to reduce the damage that can be caused by product applications or mowing equipment being used on not yet established sod. We recommend you wait as long as possible before mowing so the sod has a legitimate chance to root in.

Site specific notes to the client: \_\_\_\_\_

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