

## FALL WATER YOUR TREES

This summer has been very dry the last several weeks with some unusually warm temperatures for this time of year. It was over 100 degrees last week, a couple of days before the beginning of fall. As we move forward into the winter, it is important to keep your trees well-watered going into the winter. One thing that is very important is to make sure your trees have been watered well going into the winter months and are not being stressed from dry conditions. Young and newly planted trees (those planted within the last 3-years) are the most susceptible. They do not have the extensive root system of established trees to draw moisture from the soil. The extreme variability in temperatures we have had this year and cold temperatures in previous winters is hard on trees and puts them under stress. When trees are under stress, there are more issues from insect pests and diseases. The stress that is put on trees by insects and diseases makes trees more susceptible to drought stress. While generally healthy, well-established trees will not be affected by insects or a short-term drought for that matter, watering these trees will not hurt. You can water these trees out to the drip line, the ground beneath the tree where the leaf canopy ends. How do I know if my trees need watering? Even if you have been watering your trees on a regular basis all summer, they still will need a good soaking this fall headed into the winter unless we receive a great deal of natural precipitation (rain). Trees will benefit from a good soaking this fall. If you can't push a screwdriver in the ground around the tree, the ground needs soaking.

For newly planted trees, the Nebraska Forest Service recommends soaking the soil around the trees about an hour every week to 10 days. For young landscape trees they recommend deep watering before the ground freezes to thoroughly soak the soil. Letting a garden hose run for several hours should provide sufficient water. The Nebraska Forest Service recommends applying 5 gallons of water two or three times a week to young trees. Deep watering trees this fall could prevent serious injury to trees this winter if dry conditions persist. If you haven't done it, apply 4-6" of wood chip mulch around the base of trees, especially the newly planted trees and then water the mulch. It is also a good idea to water early in the morning which allows the tree to use the water during the day. It is best to water slowly, but deeply for newly planted trees. This helps trees develop deeper roots making them more resistant to future drought stress. Winter is a difficult time for trees, so anything you can do to reduce the stress will be beneficial. Throughout the winter if precipitation has been short, deeply water trees if the ground isn't frozen with a slow trickling hose or a slow running sprinkler left in place for a couple of hours. Apply it slow enough that it can soak in and not run off. These are some tips that hopefully should help your trees make it through the winter in good shape.

Gary Lesoing  
Extension Educator  
Nemaha County  
September 2022