Tree Care Guide

The City of Richmond's Urban Forestry Division (DPW) planted over 1,000 street trees this past year. Help grow our urban forest by watering a tree!

How Much Water

Newly planted trees require **slow and generous watering**. Give the root ball a deep soak and minimize water running off into your yard or the street.

15-20 Gallons is the ideal amount to water your tree each time.

This is the equivalent of:
- 3-4 fills of a 5-gallon plastic bucket
- 2-3 minutes of hose watering
- 1 gator bag fill-up

When to Water

Water through the growing season (March through November) for the **first 2-3 years after planting**. Watering is most important during the summer.

Summer	2 times per week
Spring / Fall	1 time per week

Watering Methods

Gator Bag
Place hose inside the hole at the top of the gator bag and fill until full. Buckets and a funnel can also be used. Use the straps at the top of the bag to lift and readjust how it sits on the ground. Gator bags should be sitting upright to allow for slow drainage through small holes at the bottom of the bag.

Hose
Use a gentle nozzle setting to soak the root ball ~1 ft. out from the trunk. If water begins to pool, turn off the hose and wait for the water to be absorbed. Repeat until the soil is fully saturated and cannot absorb any more water.

Buckets
Slowly pour a 5-gallon bucket on top of the root ball. Pause between pours to allow the water to be fully absorbed. Repeat with 2 more fills.

Keep an eye on the weather!

Trees may need extra water during hot, dry periods or less watering during cool, wet periods. The best way to determine whether a tree needs watering is to **dig carefully into the soil at the edge of the rootball.** If its dry, it's time to water.
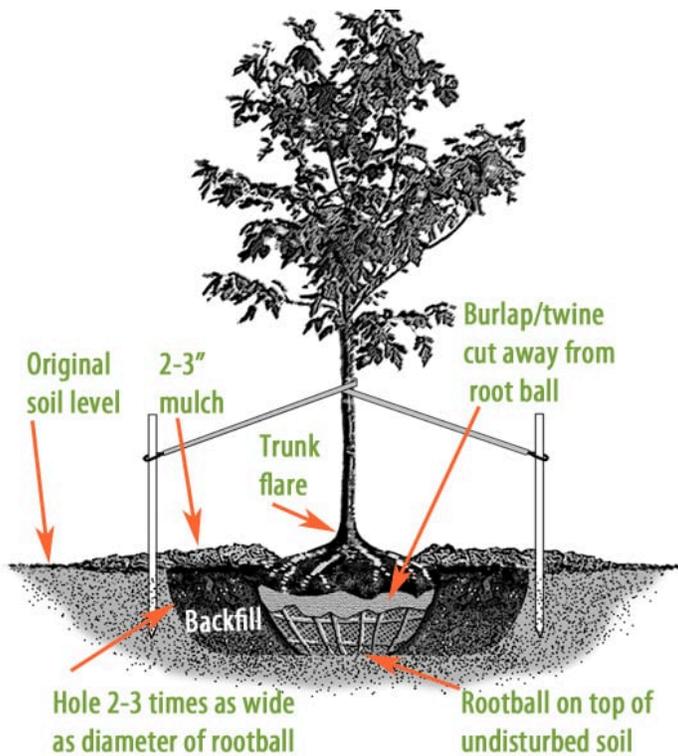
Maintaining a Healthy Tree

Mulching
Mulch can be used to retain moisture in the soil. Mulch rings can be 3 in. deep, 3 in. from root flare, and 3 ft. in width. Avoid volcano mulching which can lead to diseases and decay. Create a donut-like shape instead.

Be careful with mowers!
New trees are especially vulnerable to mower injuries, which can impact its ability to transport nutrients or introduce pathogens. Be careful when mowing or weed-whacking around the mulch circle.

Weeding
Keep the mulch ring clear of any weeds, including lawn grass, which may compete with the tree for water, nutrients, and growing space.

Where to Water

In the first 1-2 years, focus on soaking the root ball, about 1 ft. out from the trunk. As the tree gets older, it's roots will grow outward, requiring a wider mulch circle and larger watering area.

Original soil level

2-3" mulch

Burlap/twine cut away from root ball

Trunk flare

Backfill

Hole 2-3 times as wide as diameter of rootball

Rootball on top of undisturbed soil

Source: Gardener's Supply Co.

Cool the City Campaign

In July 2024, the City of Richmond and four community-based organizations began a collaborative project to invest in greening projects, workforce development, and institutional capacity building to increase Richmond's urban tree canopy.

Learn more about Cool the City at: www.rvagreen2050.com/cool-the-city

More ways to get involved:

- **Urban Forestry:** rva.gov/public-works/urban-forestry
- **Parks & Rec.:** rva.gov/parks-recreation
- **Office of Sustainability:** rvagreen2050.com

Additional Tree Care Guides:

- **VA Department of Foresty:** dof.virginia.gov/urban-community-forestry/learn-about-urban-community-forestry/tree-care/
- **Tree Stewards:** richmondtreestewards.org/tree-care
- **International Society of Arborists:** treesaregood.org

For more information visit: rva.gov/public-works/urban-forestry

Questions? Contact us at: AskPublicWorks@rva.gov