



“WHAT’S GROWING ON”

The latest news on landscape care from the experts at JLS.

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FALL AND WINTER WATERING

Dry air, low precipitation, little soil moisture and fluctuating temperatures are characteristics of fall and winter in many areas of Colorado. There often can be little or no snow cover to provide soil moisture, particularly from October through February. Trees, shrubs, perennials and lawns can be damaged if they do not receive supplemental water

The result of long, dry periods during fall and winter is injury or death to parts of plant root systems. Affected plants may appear perfectly normal and resume growth in the spring using stored food energy. Plants may be weakened and all or parts may die in late spring or early summer when temperatures rise. Weakened plants are also more susceptible to insect and disease problems.

Lack of Moisture

Woody plants with shallow root systems require supplemental watering during extended dry fall and winter periods. Herbaceous perennials in exposed sites are more subject to winter freezing and thawing. Winter watering combined with mulching can prevent damage. Lawns are also prone to winter damage. Newly established lawns, whether seed or sod, are especially susceptible to damage. Susceptibility increases for all plants with south or west exposures. Clover / Banks mite populations in dry lawn areas cause extensive damage including death to the plant, these mite populations can be greatly reduced by providing some supplemental watering to areas where clover mites develop, such as warm and dry areas around sun-exposed foundations and near evergreens.

Watering Guidelines

Water only when air temperatures are above 40 degrees F. Apply water at mid-day so it will have time to soak in before possible freezing at night. Plants receiving reflected heat from building, walls and fences are more subject to damage. The low angle of winter sun makes this more likely in south or west exposures. Windy sites result in faster drying of sod and plants and require additional water. Monitor weather conditions and water during extended dry periods – Two to three times per month without snow cover.

Newly Planted vs. Established Plants

Newly planted trees are most susceptible to winter drought injury. Woody trees generally take one year to establish for each inch of trunk diameter. Trees obtain water best when it is allowed to soak into the soil slowly to a depth of 12 inches. As a general survival rule, apply 10 gallons of water for each diameter inch of the tree. For example, a two-inch diameter tree needs 20 gallons per watering. Newly planted shrubs require more water than established shrubs that have been planted for at least one year. Shrubs should be mulched to retain moisture. In dry winters, all shrubs benefit from winter watering from October through March. Herbaceous perennial establishment periods vary. Bare root plants require longer to establish than container plants. Plants transplanted late in the summer or fall will not establish as quickly as plants planted in the spring. Winter watering is advisable with late planted perennials, bare root plants and perennials located in windy or southwest exposures.

Sources: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension