

How do I water my yard trees during this severe drought?

(August 2011)

Your trees are very valuable, follow the simple directions below to help your trees to survive this extreme drought.

Should I water my tree? Texas is in one of the worst droughts in state history. If you have a tree in your yard, it's likely stressed from the drought. Protect your trees by watering now. A couple of dollars worth of water right now can protect your tree investment.

When should I water? If you can, avoid watering during the hottest part of the day (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.). Check with your city or local water utility company for watering restrictions. Many place limits the time of day, method and duration to conserve water.

What are the best ways to water my valuable, larger yard tree?

See the pictures and instructions for:

Garden Hose and Soaker Hose: These are the preferred methods, especially if you have watering restrictions.

Garden Hose Sprinkler: This is the fastest way to water larger areas.

What if I have in-ground, pop-up automatic sprinklers? Take a long screwdriver and poke it into the soil under the tree. If it doesn't go 6" to 8" deep in the soil, give your tree more water with the above methods.

What should I not do in a drought? Don't apply high-salt, quick release fertilizers or dig under the canopy of a tree in a severe drought. Don't prune live branches off young trees just because of drought. The tree may need these branches when the rains return.

Where can I get more information about the care of my tree?

Contact a local ISA Certified Arborist at www.isatexas.com or check out the Texas Forest Service website for more tree and drought related information.



If you use a garden hose:

Test your soil with a screwdriver blade.
If it doesn't go into the soil 6 to 8
inches it's time to deeply water.



Turn the faucet on as high as you can
– adjust the flow to just before the
water starts to run off.

This saves you time.

Water closer to the trunk first and work
your way out from there. Make sure to
at least water the area under the
canopy.



Check every half hour until you know
how long it takes for water to penetrate
the soil to at least 6 to 8 inches deep.



Once the screwdriver goes in at least 6
to 8 inches, note how long it took to
water that spot. Keep moving the hose
under the canopy of the tree until it is
all watered.

**Repeat every week during a severe
drought.**

Use the 6 to 8 inch screwdriver test to
see if you need to re-water.



If you use a soaker hose:
(may be difficult to find in stores in a drought)

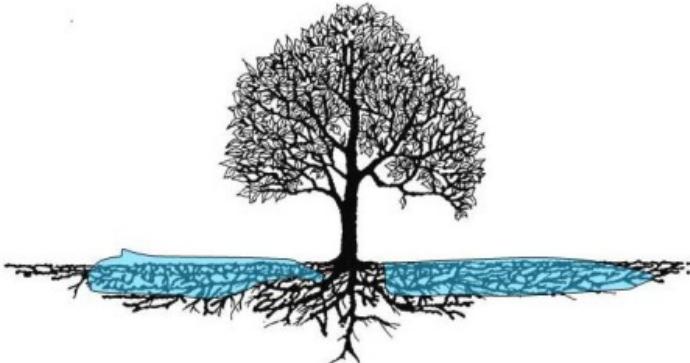
Soaker hoses work best for small to medium sized trees. It is a slow tree watering method.

Test your soil with a screwdriver blade. If it doesn't go in 6 to 8 inches into the soil it's time to deeply water.



On some soaker hoses, it can take four hours to put out one inch of water and eight hours for two inches of water.

Follow the directions that came with your soaker hose.



Put out 1 to 2 inches of water under the tree, starting near the trunk. Make sure to at least water the entire area under the canopy.



Repeat every week during a severe drought.

Use your 6 to 8 inch screwdriver test to see if you need to re-water.



If you use a sprinkler:

This is the fastest method to water your tree.

Test your soil with a screwdriver blade. If it doesn't go in 6 to 8 inches into the soil it's time to deeply water.

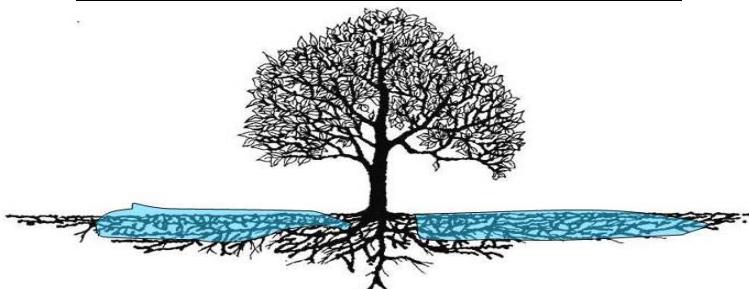


Cat food, tuna fish, soup or vegetable cans can be used to measure the amount of water a hose-end sprinkler puts out.

Put a can out under the sprinkler and water until there is 1 inch of water in the can.

This will take about 30 minutes depending on your sprinkler.

Check your container water levels every 15 minutes or so until you know how long it takes to put out 1 inch of water.



Once you know how long it takes for your sprinkler to put out 1 inch, just set your timer and keep moving the sprinkler around under the canopy of the tree. Put 1 to 2 inches of water out in each spot.

After a couple of hours, test how deep you have watered by pushing a screwdriver at least 6 to 8 inches deep into the soil. The blade will go in as far as water has penetrated. Water more if it doesn't go in at least 6 to 8 inches deep.

Repeat weekly in severe drought.
Use the 6 to 8 inch screwdriver test to see if you need to re-water.



Texas Chapter
International Society
of Arboriculture