

BUCHANAN'S

NATIVE PLANTS

Tree Follow-up Care

1. **Watering** a new tree on a regular basis is critical to the health and survival of your tree. Watering rates will depend on the weather and soil conditions, from once a week during the winter to daily during hot and dry weather. Water slowly and deeply to ensure the water reaches the whole root ball and surrounding soil.

As your tree becomes established the rate of watering can be reduced, but supplemental watering is critical for the first year. Pay close attention during times of drought. Do not rely only on sprinkler systems, but deep water with a **soaker hose** or **bubbler attachment**. Avoid overwatering if the soil has poor drainage.

2. Besides correct watering, **mulch** is your best tool for helping a tree grow to healthy maturity. Maintaining a consistent 3-4 inch layer of quality mulch over the root zone from the trunk (but not touching the trunk) to 2 feet beyond the drip line insulates the roots from summer heat and winter cold. Mulch also conserves moisture, discourages weeds, encourages beneficial soil microbes and feeds your trees.
3. If needed, **fertilize** your trees in the spring and fall. If you have beds and/or lawn around your trees, the fertilizer you apply to them may also take care of your tree. Tree roots are particularly sensitive to the salts in chemical fertilizers so be sure to use a good organic fertilizer like **MicroLife (6-2-4)**. Never use “weed and feed” fertilizers near your tree.
4. Remember that trees and lawn grasses do not generally get along. They compete for food and water, depend on different sets of microbes in the soil, and the grass will eventually be starved for light. Consider groundcovers or attractive mulch instead.
5. When first planting a young tree, prune only torn or broken branches, co-dominant leaders and narrow crotch angles. Do not prune terminal leaders or branch tips. **Never prune the lower branches of a young tree.** Lower branches are left on the trunk of the tree to manufacture food (through photosynthesis) for the tree. Studies have shown that unpruned trees establish faster and have a stronger root system than trees pruned at the time of planting.
6. **Prune to shape a tree after 2-3 years when it is established.** Regular pruning can significantly improve the beauty and health of a tree. However, improper pruning can cause long-term problems. Thus it is best to consult a professional or research the subject thoroughly before proceeding.