



MAINTAINING YOUR GARDEN

WATERING

Water is the most important element needed for plant survival. Too much or too little can stress or even kill plants. Whether you have an automatic irrigation system or water with a hose and sprinkler, you'll find the following tips of use.

How often do you water plants?

It's the old "stick your finger in the soil" method. Place your finger 2" to 3" into the soil (test several places throughout the yard). If the soil is cool and moist, no water is needed. This kind of testing is the only real way to become familiar with your yard's watering needs. Also, depending on exposure, soil will dry out at different rates in different places throughout your landscape. For example, on a shady north side you may need to water only once a week, but a sunny, windy southern or western exposure may require watering every other day. This is most critical from July through September.

How deep should the water be penetrating?

Water shrub beds deeply to encourage roots to grow deeply. Shallow watering keeps root systems shallow and holds them constant hostage to drought. A good rule of thumb is: The longer the roots, the longer the watering. Shrubs and trees have deeper roots than sod.

When is the best time to water?

Water before 10:00 am, if possible. This is the optimum time, as it will minimize fungal disease caused by water left standing on leaves overnight. Also, by 10:00 am any wet leaves will have a chance to dry before the sun can burn them (plants sunburn too). The second best time to water is the early evening. Avoid watering in the heat of the day.

Can your plants talk?

Well, in a way, yes. They will tell you if they need water. If the leaves or stem ends look wilted or if leaves appear dullish, they need water immediately.

How long will it take for the roots to get established?

Regular watering is most critical during a plant's first two years. After that, roots are more developed and can live through the occasional long weekend away.

FERTILIZING

Fertilize plants and shrubs sparingly. At Landscape East & West we plant everything with fertilizer to get your plants off to a healthy, vigorous start. Beyond that, plants will grow and even bloom with only what Mother Nature gives them, provided the soil has been amended at planting and is augmented with a good layer of compost or manure yearly. Fertilizers may be used if more rapid plant growth is desired, e.g.: to fill in groundcovers quickly or to promote re-bloom on roses. If you do fertilize, use a fertilizer appropriate to your plants' needs. For example: camellias, rhododendrons, andromeda (pieris), hydrangeas, and many heathers are acid-lovers and should be fed, after bloom, with a fertilizer made specifically for them with a low pH. Fertilizing should generally be done twice yearly: in the spring and once again in the fall (a "Fall Fertilizer" is low in nitrogen but still promotes good root growth.) Follow manufacturer's directions for application rate. Most fertilizers need to be watered in well at

the time of application. Fertilizer is most effective when it is applied around the drip zone of plants rather than close to the stem or trunk. The "drip zone" is directly beneath the outside perimeter of the tree or plant canopy.





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MULCHING

Mulch is simply a layer of organic matter – be it fir bark, composted garden clippings, or well-rotted sawdust. These are put on shrub and flowerbeds to not only insulate plants from temperature extremes in winter, but to retain moisture in summer as well. It also serves as a weak fertilizer. Put on 1 ½” to 2” of mulch. **DO NOT** put mulch up against the plant stems as this can cause disease and rot. It’s also a good idea to clean out debris that builds up under shrubs periodically to prevent these same problems.

SITING



Proper siting or location of a plant or tree can mean the difference between a plant growing vigorously, evenly, and compactly versus straggly, leaning for light, or not growing at all. Every plant has its own needs and tolerance for sun, shade, soil type, moisture, pH level, and wind. Attention to these must be paid when the landscape is planted. Landscape East & West’s designers are knowledgeable about the particular needs and wants of most of the plants appropriate for our area.

PRUNING

Most non-blooming trees and shrubs should be pruned in late winter while still dormant. As a general rule, most flowering plants should be pruned after bloom, to ensure the optimum amount of bloom for the following year. This is particularly true of plants that set buds this year for next year’s flowers such as rhododendrons, lilacs, camellias, dogwoods. Below are some additional helpful tips:



- Spireas, hydrangeas, viburnums, abelia can all be pruned in early spring for bloom the same summer.
- Any broken or damaged branches on any plant should be pruned out right away to prevent disease.
- Tree stakes should be left on trees for usually only one growing season, but the ties need to be checked so they don’t get too tight as the tree grows.
- Most heathers should be lightly pruned in late winter/early spring to stimulate new growth.
- Ornamental grasses should be cut 4” from the ground in the fall to late winter (before new growth begins).