

CARE OF NEW PLANTINGS

The best guarantee of healthy
and beautiful plants is the care
you give them!



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Staking

Trees planted in windy locations, like Helena, should be staked at planting and the stakes should remain for one year.

Tree Protection

Install tree guards or fencing in early fall to protect plants from deer and elk. If voles or rabbits are present in the area, tree protection should be installed on the lower part of the trunk to prevent girdling during the winter months. Tree wrap can be applied in the fall and left for the duration of the winter to protect young trees from sunscald, especially Lindens, Mountain Ash and fruit trees.

Mulch

A layer of mulch or compost should always be added at planting and replenished in following years as needed. Maintain a depth of compost at 2" and mulch at 3-4". It is best to apply mulch to an area as wide as the dripline and ensure it does not build up around the base of the plant.

Perennials & Grasses

Perennials and ornamental grasses die back to the ground each season and new growth emerges from the roots come spring. The spent foliage can be cut in either the fall, after a hard frost, or in the spring. Many grasses and perennials can be left for additional winter interest, food for the birds or a winter home for many insects. Most perennials are cut a couple inches above the ground, with the exception of Russian Sage and Lavender, which should be left at about 6". Any evergreen perennials and groundcovers should be left alone and cleaned up in spring if needed. Tall grasses can be chopped, or sawn, down to 3", while low mounding grasses can be trimmed into a nice 3" dome shape. It's not an exact science and plants are very forgiving!

Fertilizer

Apply a slow release fertilizer, such as Milorganite or Dr Earth, in spring covering an area as wide as the dripline of the plant.

Watering

Correct watering is crucial to the success of your plants.

Ask about a drip irrigation system that can run off your garden faucet for easy watering.

It is difficult to specify the exact amount of water your new plants will need. Plant size & type, soil & drainage, amount of mulch, exposure and weather all play a factor in determining the amount and frequency of watering. Deep watering is always preferred over more frequent shallow watering. For example, large shrubs and trees should be watered at 2-3 locations around the dripline of the plant for 30-45 minutes; small shrubs should be watered on 2 sides for 20-30 minutes each; perennials and ornamental grasses should be watered in 1 spot for 20-30 minutes.

A good starting point for trees is 10 gallons of water per 1" of trunk diameter (measured 6" above base of tree) per week. Adjust as needed to fit your soil conditions.

Soil Conditions

Plants growing in poorly drained clay soils require less frequent watering. It is very important with this type of soil to not overwater; this can suffocate and kill the plant. Consider watering deeply 1-2 times per week during the summer, adjusting as needed. Plants growing in gravel or sandy conditions will drain fast and require water more frequently. Consider watering deeply 3-4 times per week during the summer.

Montana Weather

You know what I'm talking about, it's crazy and unpredictable. Weather can drastically change watering needs, especially in our climate. Hot, dry, windy conditions require more frequent, deeper watering. In cool, wet weather watering can be reduced. Most rains are quick and NOT deep soaking.

Harden off Plants before Winter

Beginning in August, gradually reduce summer watering to 1-2 times per week with less water to allow deciduous plants to harden off (every 10-14 days for high clay soils). Make sure to give plants a deep watering in early November before the ground freezes. This is especially important for first and second year deciduous plants, and always beneficial for evergreens.

Overwatering

Too much water can be just as bad as not enough water. Plants can drown in heavy clay soils, or in low spots of an irrigated lawn. If the ground is squishy when walked on adjust the watering in that zone. Overwatering symptoms can be very similar to underwatering and appear as yellow leaves, brown edges, and wilting.

Special Situations

- Trees planted in turf areas will need additional water, as grass roots are relatively shallow compared to that of a tree. (Exception: high clay soils)
- Always apply water on the uphill side of a plant on a slope and oftentimes more water is needed due to runoff.
- Planting areas mulched with rock or near concrete will absorb more heat and require higher water amounts.