

WINTER WATERING IN COLORADO

Year round maintenance of plants is essential in any landscape, even in the winter, when watering is crucial and often overlooked. In Colorado, particularly on the eastern plains, our driest months are during winter and many plants need supplemental water in order to survive. This is true for both deciduous and evergreen plants.

Many woody plants have shallow root systems which cannot tap into the underground water supply, thus subjecting themselves to root damage. The result is a stressed plant that is weakened throughout the winter, making them more susceptible to insects and disease. In many instances, the problem isn't noticed until late spring or summer.

Conifers and broadleaf evergreens are more subject to winter desiccation than their deciduous counterparts. Diagnosis is easier, because the problem is immediately visible.

There are three important guidelines to remember when winter watering:

1. Water only when the ground is not frozen and when the temperature is above 32°. The most important time to water is in the fall, prior to freezing temperatures.
2. Newly planted trees and shrubs should be watered for about an hour with a slow trickle from a garden hose.
3. Use a lawn sprinkler for established trees, since their roots are generally shallow and have a spread comparable to the height of that particular plant.

Remember, a foot of snow only adds up to an inch of moisture, so it becomes imperative that we keep an eye on our landscapes – even in winter.