

## Summer Time Tree Care Tips

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Summers are challenging for urban trees. Extreme heat, prolonged droughts, and voracious pests can cause even the healthiest tree to suffer. For the homeowner, it's important to stay vigilant and be able to recognize when a tree is under stress and needs a helping hand. Here are four things you can do to help your tree make it through the summer.

- 1) **Do Not Let Your Tree Get Thirsty.** Lack of water over long periods of time is a leading cause of death among urban trees. Though all trees can suffer, newly or recently planted ones are most vulnerable. If your "young" tree lacks water, look for signs of leaf wilt, browning, or shedding. For each week without rain, apply 10 gallons of water per caliper inch (caliper is the stem thickness or diameter measured 6 inches above ground. Trees over 4-inch caliper are measured 12 inches above ground.) Watering is best done by soaker hose or direct watering. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the best time to water is in the evening and early morning hours so as to avoid evaporation loss. Let the water soak in. Don't sprinkle.
- 2) **Avoid Landscape Damage.** Routine lawn care activities can be a tree killer. Too many urban trees die because someone used a string trimmer too close to the bark or bumped a lawnmower against a tree. Physical injuries damage or strip away life essential tissue under the bark. A good preventative treatment is to mulch around a tree and control weeds and grass so that trimming or cutting next to the trunk is unnecessary.
- 3) **Check for Insects and Diseases.** Tree pests tend to have life cycles that are most active during the growing season. This makes it easier to see their signs and symptoms. Keep in mind that all pests are part of nature's cycle and play important roles in our ecosystem.

Just because you see a caterpillar or blotchy leaf doesn't mean the tree is doomed. Like people, trees also have ailments and afflictions. Most pest problems are eyesore or nuisance issues. If you see a pest, look to see how the tree is responding. If it shows signs of decline, contact your local Extension office for advice.

- 4) **Give Your Tree an annual Checkup.** Homeowners should examine their trees at least once a year and after a major storm. It's a great way to get a sense of the tree's overall health, condition, and vigor. It is also a great way to learn about trees. Summertime is the best time to do this, when the tree is in full foliage.