

## Water the Landscape

Rachael Brooke  
Phillips-Rooks District Extension Agent  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Much of Kansas is in a severe or exceptional drought this spring. Watering now is very important to help alleviate moisture stress even in your windbreak.

A good, deep watering with moisture reaching at least a foot down into the soil is much better than several light sprinklings that just wet the top portions of the soil. A deep watering will help ensure that the majority of roots have access to water. Use a metal rod, wooden dowel, electric fence post turned upside down or something similar to check moisture depth. Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet.

Although all perennial plants benefit from moist soils, it is especially important for newly planted or overseeded lawns as well as newly transplanted trees and shrubs due to limited root systems. Even trees and shrubs planted within the last 2 to 3 years are more sensitive to drought than a well-established plant. Evergreens are also more at risk because moisture is lost from the foliage year-round.

Trees or shrubs planted within the last year can be watered inexpensively with a 5-gallon bucket. Drill a small hole (1/8") in the side of the bucket near the bottom. Fill the bucket and let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Refill the bucket once more, and you have applied 10 gallons. Very large transplanted trees and trees that were transplants two to three years ago will require more water.

A perforated soaker hose is a good way to water a newly established bed or foundation plantings. However, soaker hoses are notorious for non-uniform watering. In other words, you often receive too much water from one part of the hose and not enough from another. Hooking both the beginning and the end of the soaker hose to a Y-adapter help equalize the pressure and therefore provide a uniform watering. It is also helpful if the Y-adapter has shut off valves so the volume of flow can be controlled. Too high a flow rate can allow water to run off rather than soak in.

On larger trees, the soaker hose can circle the trunk at a distance within the dripline of the tree but at least ½ the distance to the dripline. The dripline of the tree is the outermost reach of the branches. On smaller trees, you may circle the tree several times so that only soil that has tree roots will be watered.

If using a soaker hose, not the time watering was started. Check frequently to determine the amount of time it takes for water to reach 12 inches. From then on, you can water "by the clock". If you are seeing surface runoff, reduce the flow, or build a berm with at least a 4-foot diameter around the base of the tree to allow the water to percolate down through the soil, instead of spreading out.

Fall planted or overseeded lawns can be watered with an overhead sprinkler. Watering to a depth of 12 inches with this method would be a challenge but try to reach at least 6 inches deep.

For more information, please contact the local K-State Research and Extension Office.

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.