

Summer Tree Care Tips

Drought Care

We're now in our fifth consecutive year of drought and on water rationing, so it's crucial to know which plants need water and which don't. California Oaks, Junipers, Pittosporum, and Pyracantha definitely need not be watered. In fact, most of your trees and shrubs can survive with very little or no water. However, Camellias, Azaleas, Birches, and citrus need at least occasional water to keep them alive. If you're not sure how much water to give a particular plant, a good source is Sunset's Western Garden Book. Don't forget to water your Monterey Pine in the early summer, at least once, and deeply, not near the trunk, but around the dripline (near the edge of the canopy) to strengthen its resistance to Pine Borer infestation. (Or risk spending thousands to remove it after it dies.)

Tricks to Save Water

Mulch: Use a 3-4 inch blanket of organic matter such as bark, leaves, or cocoa hulls. It not only saves water and reduces weed growth, it also improves the soil, prevents erosion, and enhances root development.

Turn off your sprinkler system: Water thirsty plants by hand. Water infrequently, but deeply, and use a soaker hose rather than a sprinkler.

Mix peat moss into your soil: It has excellent water retaining qualities. (For a more potent, albeit less organic amendment, try Terrasorb. Use it in a tree's dripline area only - not around the trunk.)

Prune your trees...

Summer Pruning

Most plants, except Pines, can be pruned in the summer. Indeed, if one of your purposes in pruning is to slow a plant down (often a good idea in the city), then late spring and summer is the time to do it. Trees and shrubs that are thinned in the summer generally stay thin for a longer period of time.

An added benefit of summer thinning is that it reduces a plant's water consumption. However, be a little cautious about heavy shaping of shrubs at this time. While you probably won't damage the plant - although you might during a heat wave - you could be cutting off the buds for your next crop of flowers.

The Best Possible Care

Remember that the "best possible care" varies from plant to plant. Every plant has its ideal conditions in terms of soil, water, shade, etc., and it's good to know what they are

for each of your plants. One trick here is to know each plant's native habitat and to try, as much as possible, to give it the same environment it would have "at home."

We encourage you to get out there and dig in the dirt! It's fun! It's also good for your health and peace of mind. But for the things you can't do yourself, we hope you will call us. We think you'll like our careful, aesthetic approach to pruning, our friendly, knowledgeable staff, and our customized service. As with nearly everything in life, quality is usually your best long-term investment.