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## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release through September 30, 2024

### **Boulevard trees need help to survive extreme summer heat**

If hot summer days are leaving you thirsty, chances are your street trees need some water too. Scorching temperatures and dry conditions threaten the lives of Missoula's street trees, according to Urban Forestry Program Specialist Marie DuCharme. "Extreme heat can severely damage and even kill trees if they don't get enough water."

"Urban trees need consistent supplemental watering during hot, dry weather," DuCharme said. "Without help from residents, we could see dozens of mature, shade-providing trees damaged due to heat and drought conditions."

Along with cooling shade, properly maintained street trees increase property values, filter pollutants, and lower ambient temperatures. But the tree's roots, branches and leaves suffer in hot, parched conditions.

To save our urban forest, DuCharme urges residents to deeply water boulevard trees near their homes two to three times per week. Normal lawn sprinkling doesn't give trees the hydration they need. Focus watering at the canopy's edges so it reaches the thirsty roots.

Newly planted trees require extra care. Water them slowly and deeply near their canopies every two days during their first three summers to encourage healthy root growth.

Proper watering preserves the benefits trees provide, like shading homes, cleaning air and water, and boosting curb appeal, DuCharme said. "Together, we can help our neighborhood trees survive summer heat and ensure Missoula's urban forest continues to thrive for years to come."

Residents can learn more about boulevard tree care at [www.missoulaparks.org/trees](http://www.missoulaparks.org/trees). Contact the Urban Forestry Division at [citytrees@ci.missoula.mt.us](mailto:citytrees@ci.missoula.mt.us) or 406-552-6253 for more information on [city tree ordinances](#), which require property owners to water and maintain boulevard trees adjacent to their property.

(end)

**Media note:** please see attached summer tree care handout, feel free to share it on your websites or link to it at <https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/67319/2023-08-Summer-Tree-Care-Flyer>.

# We need trees and trees need water



Missoula's trees are a precious resource that make our hot summers livable. Drought and excessive heat can kill hundreds of trees throughout Missoula County.

Together, we can prevent this crisis from happening. Saving our existing tree canopy and planting new trees is our path toward a resilient future.

## Trees are worth it

**It only costs around \$2 per month to water a mature tree.**



For the price of a coffee, trees clean our air, cool our homes, replenish groundwater, improve our health, and create livable and lovable neighborhoods. We depend on them.

## Add mulch, save water

Adding natural wood chip mulch around your tree will:



- Help your tree grow faster
- Keep moisture in the soil
- Protect roots from extreme temperatures
- Release nutrients into the soil
- Discourage competition from grass & weeds

Spread mulch in a fluffy donut shape in a 4-foot diameter around your tree. Keep it 4 inches away from the trunk, and layer it 6 inches thick.

Rocks, decomposed granite, weed block fabric, and artificial turf will increase water runoff and trap heat in the soil. These should not be placed around trees.

## When to water

The amount of water your tree needs depends on your soil and tree type.



How do you know when it's time to water? Check the soil!

Use a screwdriver or soil probe to check the soil at least 6" deep near the drip line of your tree (the soil beneath the farthest reaches of the tree's branches). If the soil is hard, dry, and crumbly, add water with a slow soak. If the soil is wet or sticky, allow it to dry before adding more water.

## What to avoid

- Fertilizer: Adding fertilizer encourages leafy growth, which requires more water.
- Pruning: Wait until fall to make large pruning cuts.
- Overwatering: Roots need water, but they need oxygen too. Check soil moisture before watering, and water slowly to prevent wasteful runoff.



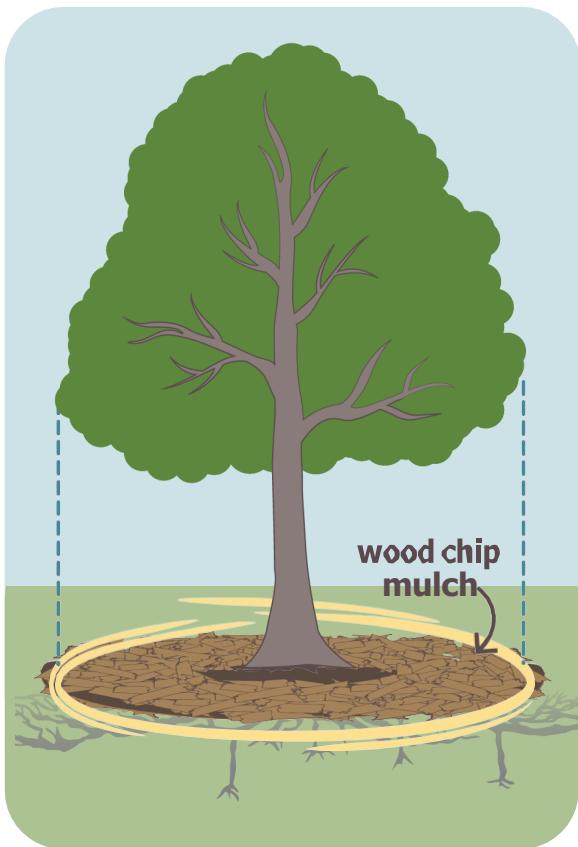
## For more tips:

web: missoulaparks.org • treesformissoula.org  
phone: 406-552-6253  
email: citytrees@ci.missoula.mt.us



# How to water your tree responsibly

BECAUSE LAWN SPRINKLERS WON'T CUT IT



## Established trees (3+ years after planting)

Slowly soak the tree's drip line, the circular area under the farthest reaches of the branches, until water reaches 12-18 inches below the surface. Don't water close to the trunk.

You can use:

- A soaker hose
- A hose sprinkler on a low setting
- Drip tubing or emitters

If the root zone extends under hardscape or beyond your property, slowly soak as much of the root zone as possible.

Contact the Urban Forestry Division at [citytrees@ci.missoula.mt.us](mailto:citytrees@ci.missoula.mt.us) or 406-552-6253 if you have questions about the health of a boulevard tree.

## Young trees (1-3 years after planting)

The roots of a young tree are located mostly near the trunk.

The easiest way to water young trees? Drill a small 1/8" hole near the bottom of a 5-gallon bucket. Place it near the rootball, fill it with water, and allow it to slowly drain into the soil.

AGE	FREQUENCY	AMOUNT
1 yr	2-3 times/week	1 bucket
2 yrs	Once per week	2 buckets
3 yrs	Every other week	3 buckets

You can also use a small soaker hose, drip tubing or emitters, or a hose sprinkler on a very low setting. Avoid spraying the trunk and expand the watering zone outward as the tree grows.

