



Missoula Parks and Recreation Public Service Announcement

For immediate release

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Street trees suffering in summer weather

The heat is hard on all of us, but did you know it can KILL trees? The next time you seek shelter under a cool, leafy boulevard tree, Parks and Recreation wants you to remember that city trees need your help to survive these soaring temperatures—and City ordinance requires property owners to care for adjacent street trees.

Well-maintained street trees increase property values, provide shade to make your home or business more comfortable, and filter air and water pollutants. The cost of watering this valuable resource is just pennies a day, but boulevard trees pay immeasurable benefits all year long. Your lawn may yellow a bit during these hot weeks of summer, but it will spring back to life when the weather cools. Trees, on the other hand, will be permanently damaged by lack of water during hot weather.

Urban Forester Ben Carson offers these tree care tips:

- Mature boulevard trees need deep watering once or twice a week to help ensure their continued survival. For established trees, run your sprinkler so that each time you water you are applying two inches of water. How do you know when you have put down 2 inches of water? Place several tin cans in the radius of your lawn sprinkler. When the average depth in the cans is 2 inches you have provided enough water to adequately water your tree and encourage strong root growth. Normal lawn watering does not provide enough water to keep trees healthy during dry months.
- Saturate the soil around the tree within the “dripline” (the outer edges of the tree’s branches) to disperse water down toward the roots.
- For newly planted trees; water by placing your hose under the crown of the tree, and turn the water on at a slow rate for two hours. If a garden hose is not available, apply at least 20 gallons (four, 5-gallon pails of water) slowly around each young tree. Carson recommends that property owners water young boulevard trees at least two to three times per week in the summer. Try the screwdriver test described below, and definitely water if you see wilting leaves on the tree. Stop watering at first sign of runoff. Continue watering at least once per week until the ground

freezes. Supplemental watering should continue for at least three seasons until the tree becomes established.

- Check for adequate moisture levels by sticking a screwdriver into the soil around a tree. If the screwdriver pushes into the soil easily, at a depth of 6 to 8 inches, the tree is probably getting enough water.
- Mulching will increase the moisture-holding capacity of your soil. An organic wood mulch, layered about 2 to 4 inches thick, spread as wide as the drip line of the tree will hold the moisture longer, inhibit weed growth and help moderate soil temperatures. Pull the mulch away from the trunk of the trees 4 to 6 inches to deter fungal diseases.
- Landlords, please remind tenants to water boulevard trees. The trees add value to your property and reduce your utility costs.

Remember, City ordinance requires residents to maintain the trees on the boulevard; Parks and Recreation will assist property owners as much as resources allow. Please feel free to call Ben Carson at 552-6270 or bcarson@ci.missoula.mt.us for more information on maintaining trees and shrubs or any plant care questions you may have. Visit our website, www.missoulaparks.org, for tree care tips and ordinances related to trees in the City right-of-way.

Any pruning, planting or removal of boulevard trees must be done by a licensed and insured ISA Certified Arborist, and approved by the Urban Forestry Division prior to the work. Carson would also like to remind citizens that “topping,” or the indiscriminate cutting back of tree branches to stubs, is perhaps the most harmful tree pruning practice known and is never recommended by responsible arborists.

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