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## **HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR NEW TREE**

### **Watering**

Watering is the most important activity to ensure the health of your young tree. Trees should be watered regularly during the first 3 years, from bud break in the spring to leaf drop in the fall. Watering should be increased during drier summer weather. One good rule of thumb is to give each tree 10 gallons of water plus an additional 5 gallons of water per inch of trunk caliper on a weekly basis. (Ex: A 2" caliper tree will require 15 gallons of water per week.)

### **Mulch**

Mulch reduces water evaporation from the soil and helps minimize the growth of weeds. Grass and weeds absorb essential water and nutrients that should be going to the tree's roots. There should be approximately an 18-inch radius of mulch around the tree, except for a 3-inch radius at the base of the trunk, which should be free of mulch to deter fungus and disease from infecting the tree's bark.

### **Stakes and Tree Ties**

Studies have shown that trees which are not staked tend to grow and establish faster than trees which are staked. Stakes can also damage the tree trunk if installed improperly or left in place too long. Stakes should only be used if deemed necessary. If used, all stakes and ties should be removed 6 months after planting.

### **Pruning**

Trees need leaves to produce food and energy to grow. The more leaves a tree has, the more it can grow. During the first year, only broken or dead branches should be pruned from the tree. In the second year, the tree should only be pruned where branches rub together. Suckers or young shoots growing from the base of the tree should be removed at all times.

### **Never Top a Tree!**

Topping is a very damaging practice that is detrimental to a tree's health and natural beauty. There are many reasons not to top trees, including:

- Topping can send a tree into shock by removing too much food-producing foliage at once.
- Removing too much foliage at once exposes bark tissue to the scalding effects of the sun.
- Topping creates an unhealthy imbalance between leaves and roots.
- Removing too many branches at once increases the chances for infections, as larger branches have difficulty healing.
- New branch growth is always weak on topped trees and can be a safety hazard.

**Also: Avoid Weed Wacker/Mower damage at the base of your young tree!**