



# NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

## Keep Your Trees Healthy During Watering Restrictions (July 17, 2021)

by Pam Wallace, UCCE Master Gardener

We all should know by now the value and benefits of trees in our landscapes.

- Trees improve air quality through photosynthesis and the storage of carbon.
- Trees provide shade in our landscapes, reducing the water needs of surrounding plants.
- Trees help keep your home cooler, which reduces electricity usage.
- Trees reduce soil erosion by slowing storm water runoff.
- Trees provide us with food, and animals with food and shelter.
- Trees improve property values.

As our climate changes and we are faced with watering restrictions, we need to take steps to protect our trees and help them survive the drought.



The U.S. Drought Monitor shows nearly all of California is in some stage of drought as the state braces for dry and hot summer. It looks as if the state must brace itself for another devastating wildfire season after a winter with little precipitation.

About three-quarters of the American West is in what is called a megadrought, with critical waterways like the Colorado River and Rio Grande that supply millions of people and farms expected to have dismally low flows this year.

According to the City of Visalia's website, "9 out of the last 11 years, Visalia has experienced below average rainfall, and the groundwater table the City relies on for its water supply remains critically low, measuring 30 feet lower than in 2010. As a consequence, the City Council has authorized that Stage 2 (Water Alert) conservation measures be implemented effective March 1, 2021."

Most of the cities and towns in our area have watering restrictions in effect. Both the cities of Visalia and Tulare are allowing watering for the summer months only two days per week and only during designated times. (Drip irrigation systems are not subject to these schedules.) Failure to follow guidelines will result in a possible citation and fine. Please check with your city for current watering days and schedules.

As we reduce the number of days per week to water, we may not realize the impact this will have on our landscape trees. Trees in irrigated landscapes become dependent on regular watering, especially trees in lawns. When this water is reduced, trees can suffer and eventually die.

### Here are some tips to reduce the effect of watering restrictions on your landscape trees.

- Deeply and slowly water mature trees 1-2 times per month with a simple soaker hose or drip system toward the edge of the tree canopy -- NOT at the base of the tree. This enables trees to grow deep roots that help them withstand drought and longer periods between irrigations. A slow irrigation allows the water to percolate deeper into the soil. Arborists recommend applying water to a depth of three feet. Use a Hose Faucet Timer to prevent overwatering.

- Young trees need 5 gallons of water 2-4 times per week. Create a watering basin within a berm of dirt. This basin should be constructed a little higher around the trunk of the tree, so the water drains away from the trunk.
- Do not over-prune trees during drought. This can stress your trees or stimulate a flush of new growth, causing them to use more water.
- Mulch, Mulch, Mulch! 4-6 inches of organic mulch keeps tree roots moist and cool, helps retain moisture in the soil, and releases nutrients to the tree. Be sure to keep the mulch at least 3 to 12 inches from the base of the trunks to prevent rot.
- Put a 3- or 5-gallon bucket on your shower floor to catch the water while you are waiting for the water to get hot. Use this water for your trees, making sure it is free of non-biodegradable soaps and shampoos. You'll be surprised how easy this is to do and how much water you can save from going down the drain!



Tree loss is a very costly problem; not only in expensive tree removal, but also in the loss of the benefits a tree provides. By following these tips, you will better equip your landscape trees to survive their reduced watering this summer.

**The Tulare-Kings County Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions in person:**

Ace Hardware, Visalia - 1st Sat./every month, 10 am-1 pm

Luis Nursery, Visalia - 2nd Sat./every month, 10 am-2 pm

Hanford Farmer's Market - 4<sup>th</sup> Thurs, May - Sept., 5-8 pm, 7th ST. and Irwin Downtown Hanford

Visalia Farmer's Market - Saturdays, 8-11 am, 2100 W. Caldwell Ave (behind Sears Building)

**Questions? Call us:**

Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30

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