

(photo from <https://www.denverwater.org>, figure 1)

The number one call coming into the Extension office is “why is my tree dying?” The answer is not too complicated as we were in a severe drought a couple of years ago, then we had a very unusual polar vortex come through our state, followed by an ice storm. And areas of our state are currently in a moderate to extreme drought (figure 2) because of lack of rainfall and warmer temperatures for this time of year.

We have no way of knowing the extent of internal damage the trees went through during those challenging times. When we experience an ice storm, limbs break at different points on the trees which opens a wound for disease to enter. The polar vortex caused cells inside the trees to burst causing unknown damage. And during the drought, there was no way people could water their trees enough.

Proper watering of trees, lawns, shrubs, house plants, vegetable gardens, and perennial gardens is something that is hard for people to understand. The only way of really knowing if you need to water a plant is to check the moisture of the soil. Yes, as a general rule of thumb we say one inch of water per week for most lawns and gardens, but what if it is 100 degrees outside and the wind is blowing 25mph - is one inch per week adequate? Maybe not. That is why checking the soil moisture is the best indicator of watering needs. And, by the way, overwatering a plant will stress a plant into showing some of the same symptoms as underwater such as wilting, yellowing of leaves, and ultimately death of the plant.

There also seems to be a misconception about watering trees. Hopefully, the diagram (figure 1) will provide a good visual of a tree's structure and help to better understand how to water a tree properly. Consistency of watering is also important. Allowing the soil to completely dry out or allowing it to stay soggy results in a tree that is stressed. When trees are stressed, they are more prone to disease and infestation. Proper mulching can help retain moisture and lower soil temperatures which will help the health of the tree (not to mention making the area under the tree look better).

A rule of thumb about how much to water an established tree is ten gallons per one inch diameter of the tree, measured at knee high. Deep watering in the morning or evening is best. Keep in mind that soil types make a difference as well. Clay soil holds more water than sandy soil.

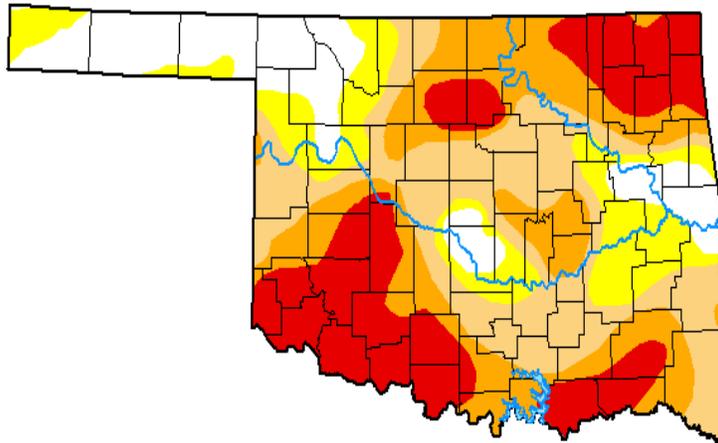
Finally, to keep a tree healthy, if you see dead or broken branches in your trees, it is best to remove those as soon as possible. It is also recommended that you call a certified arborist for assistance.

A list of certified arborists can be found at:

<https://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist/findanarborist>

# U.S. Drought Monitor Oklahoma

**October 8, 2024**  
(Released Thursday, Oct. 10, 2024)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
<b>Current</b>	15.56	84.44	70.27	45.29	23.41	0.00
<b>Last Week</b> 10-01-2024	22.82	77.18	61.31	37.39	11.50	0.00
<b>3 Months Ago</b> 07-09-2024	40.10	59.90	17.79	3.78	0.00	0.00
<b>Start of Calendar Year</b> 01-02-2024	55.32	44.68	21.64	3.08	0.00	0.00
<b>Start of Water Year</b> 09-26-2023	34.29	65.71	46.76	30.93	12.91	0.00
<b>One Year Ago</b> 10-10-2023	36.68	63.32	43.11	29.44	8.48	0.00

Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

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[droughtmonitor.unl.edu](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

(figure 2)