

Proper Winter Watering



It's an age old question - should we water our lawn in the winter? Although the grass is dormant, the roots are still growing, slightly. Water is a good thing to ensure a great return to your turf in the spring. However, we may be able to count on winter rainfall to see us through. Most often, winter watering isn't necessary but, if it really gets dry and we don't get much rain or snow, we should take heed and help our lawns and landscape shrubs. The following are some tips and steps to take to keep your landscape healthy through the winter months:

1. Avoid cutting your lawn too short in late fall. If the top growth is very short, it will dry out faster and require watering. If there's low rainfall, it's best to keep it a bit taller.
2. If your soil is heavy clay, it will hold water longer. So, before you consider watering, put a spade a few inches into your soil to determine whether there's any moisture.
3. Most of the time, we won't need to water in the winter. But, if we do, once a month should suffice.

4. Shrubs benefit from winter watering from October through March. If they are newly planted, say less than a year old, apply up to 5 gallons monthly during dry spells.
5. Water only when the air and soil temps are above 40° and apply water mid-day to provide time for the water to soak in before a possible freeze later that night.
6. If you have large, established trees on your lawn, water along the dripline which is the most critical part of the root zone.
7. Newly established lawns are susceptible to winter damage, whether sodded or seeded. And, they are more susceptible if they are a western or southern exposure.
8. Once you are finished watering, make certain to unscrew your hose from the spigot to avoid freeze damage.
9. Make certain not to over-water. If you receive ample rainfall in the fall, you may only have to water newly seeded areas or over-seeded lawns that have just been started (i.e. annual rye grass or fescue).

So, in response to whether or not you need to water in the winter, the answer is a definite “Maybe.” Just remember . . . if you can’t put a 6” screwdriver into your lawn, you do need to water!