



Landscape Services

Safety Standard Operating Procedure

(Revised 2/2023)

Watering for Maintenance of Established Plant Material

This SSOP provides guidance on the safe watering for maintenance of established plant material. As with any equipment or tools, the most basic premise for safe operation is reading and adhering to the manufacturer's instructions and warnings. This SSOP is not a substitute for the owner's manual produced by the manufacturer.

Safety

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|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PPE Required for Maintenance Watering: | Gloves, sturdy footwear |
| Scheduled: | Immediately upon planting of new material |
| Watering Materials Needed: | Water wagon, soil probe, watering wand or watering probe |
| Safety Hazards: | Vehicle and pedestrian traffic, lifting, bending, noise, equipment malfunction, hot or cold temperatures, sharp objects and inclement weather. |

Inspection of Plant Material

1. Inspect the watering list to determine the plant material around campus that needs to be inspected and watered for the day.
2. Identify high priority plant material and ensure that these are inspected daily.
3. When inspecting plant material for watering needs, it is important to probe the soil within the planting hole first.
 - a. Inspecting the soil planting hole before watering allows you to identify whether the plant needs water or if it is still wet from the previous watering.
4. When you pull your core, inspect the soil by not only visual but by placing the plug in your hands and squeezing the soil together in your palm.
 - a. If the soil is tacky and can form a mud ball, the soil moisture content is relatively high
 - b. If the soil cannot form a ball when squeezing it in your hand, then moisture content is on the dry side
5. Based on soil moisture contents, follow the steps below accordingly.
 - a. If the soil moisture content is sufficient, inspect the plant visually to verify the overall health of the plant.
 - i. Inspect the leaves and look for curling or burning at the fringe of the leaf.
 1. If you see burning at the fringe of the leaf and the soil moisture is high, then that often indicates that the plant has available water, but the plant cannot uptake water fast enough to reach the leaf fringe.

2. If you are seeing the inside and lower portion of leaves turn yellow and you are losing leaves from the inside out, ensure that the soil is not too wet as the plant may be overwatered.
- b. If the soil is on the dry side, inspect the overall health of the plant.
 - i. Inspect the crown of the plant to make sure that there are no signs of dieback.
 - ii. If the lower portion of the plant looks healthy and the top looks stressed, this is a sign of an underwatered plant.

Watering of Plant Material

1. After completing the soil and visual inspection of the plant material, remove the hose from the water wagon.
2. For trees and shrubs, attach the watering probe. For annuals and perennials, attach the hose wand.
3. Water the plant thoroughly to ensure that we are getting water to a depth of twelve inches for trees and shrubs and six inches for perennials and annuals.
 - a. Watering Probe Method
 - i. When watering with a watering probe, stick the probe into the ground at the edge of the planting hole and water for thirty seconds.
 - ii. Remove the probe from the ground and rotate around the planting hole and repeat step one four more times.
 - iii. This will allow for us to put the water where it is needed for the rootzone
 - iv. Once you have completed the watering probe around the tree, remove the probe from the hose and water the surface of the tree for one minute to soak the surface fibrous roots.
 - b. Hose Wand Method
 - i. Water at the base of the plant for thirty to forty-five seconds.
 1. Try to avoid watering the leaves of the plant as this can potentially lead to plant damage or leaf fungal issues.
4. If mulch was disturbed when watering, rake the mulch back to cover soil. Ensure that the bed is left clean upon completion.