



Forestry staff winter waters a young Ponderosa pine in Lions Park

The City of Cheyenne Urban Forestry Division encourages property owners to water trees and shrubs during winter months. Winter survival of trees and shrubs depends to a large degree on ample soil moisture levels throughout the year. This is also true during the winter months. Even though trees are in a semi-dormant state, water needs to be applied to ensure trees have sufficient amounts of moisture to prevent die back or needle desiccation.

Dry winter winds can cause water loss through the needles on evergreens and the branches on deciduous trees to the point of causing significant limb die back or entire tree mortality. Wyoming winds tend to dry out the ground, even in the winter months which can have a negative impact on trees and shrubs.

Here are some winter watering tips:

- **Water when it's warm.** The best time for winter watering is on days when snow has melted off and the temperature is above 40 degrees.
- **Water a wide area.** Tree root systems may spread much wider than the height of the tree, with most absorbing roots in the top foot of soil. Apply water to soak the entire area underneath the full span of a tree's branches.
- **Water slowly.** To ensure deep penetration, use a drip or soaker hose on low setting, or soft spray wand, to apply water slowly to the full area at the rate of 10 gallons per inch of tree diameter.
- **Retain mulch.** To retain soil moisture and save water, apply 4 inches of organic mulch onto bare soil within 2 to 3 feet from the base of the trunk, but not directly against the trunk.
- **Repeat as necessary.** Until abundant spring precipitation arrives, be sure to continue watering every few weeks in the absence of snow and colder temperatures.
- **Focus on younger trees.** With less-extensive root systems, younger trees often become stressed before older, more established trees, so if you don't have time to care for all your trees, care for the young ones first.