



Brazos County  
Master Gardener Association



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## **TREE AND SHRUB IRRIGATION DURING DROUGHT**

by Doug Welsh, Associate Department Head and Extension Horticulturist

During a severe drought, the goal for tree and shrub irrigation is twofold:

- reduce water use to save precious water and money
- use enough water to preserve your substantial investment in your landscape trees and shrubs

Irrigating large trees is often misunderstood. Laying a hose at the trunk of a large tree and letting it run for hours does not water a tree and can waste huge amounts of water. In addition, sprinkler irrigation systems do not water trees. They simply do not apply enough volume of water to meet the tree's requirement.

To irrigate trees and large shrubs, apply water just inside and a little beyond the "dripline", not at the trunk. The dripline is the area directly below the outermost reaches of the branches. This is where the feeding root system of a tree or shrub is located.

Simply lay a slowly running hose on the ground and move it around the dripline as each area becomes saturated to a depth of 8 to 10 inches. For large trees, this watering technique may take several hours. (Soaker or flat drip/low volume hose may also be used. For trees, circle the tree with the water hose.)

In the continued absence of significant rainfall, large trees and shrubs will benefit from a twice a month watering to help them survive drought and heat.

One final action to take to help your landscape survive a drought is mulch. A 2-inch layer of mulch will reduce water lost to evaporation from the soil surface, as well as, reduce the soil temperature for a healthier root system.

Water conservation - protecting and preserving today's resources for the future.

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