

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Winter Garden Watering”*

According to K-State horticulture expert, Ward Upham, snow across Kansas has provided some relief to landscapes during the dry December month, but yards may still need another shot of moisture to alleviate stress in lawns and gardens. A heavy watering that reaches moisture a foot down into the soil is much better than several light sprinklings that just wet the topsoil. This deep watering will ensure that the majority of roots have access to water.

It is encouraged that homeowners test the moisture content in their yard’s soil by pushing a metal rod, wooden dowel, electric fence post or similar item into the ground. If you have an easy time of pushing the rod in that is good indicator of appropriate moisture content, and obviously would indicate it being too dry if you experience difficulty doing so. Measure how far down the implement goes to determine the amount of moisture is in the soil. It is especially important for newly planted or over-seeded lawns, as well as newly transplanted trees and shrubs to have a higher soil moisture content due to their limited root systems. Evergreens can be more at risk because the moisture is lost from the foliage. Trees and shrubs planted within the last 2-3 years can even be more sensitive to drought than a well-established plant.

Here are a few tips Upham has for watering common areas of the yard.

Trees and shrubs planted within the last year. Drill a small hole in a five-gallon bucket near the bottom, then fill the bucket and let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Refill the bucket once so that you apply 10 gallons. Larger trees planted 2-3 years prior may require more water.

Large trees. Using a soaker hose, circle the trunk one-half the distance to the dripline, or the outermost reach of branches. On smaller trees, you may need to circle the tree several times so that only soil which has tree roots will be watered.

Newly established bed or foundation plantings. Hook the beginning and end of a soaker hose to a Y-adapter to equalize pressure, which encourages more uniform watering.

Fall planted or over-seeded lawns. Use an overhead sprinkler. Watering to a depth of 12 inches is more difficult; try to reach at least six inches deep.

Information comes from K-State University horticulture specialist Ward Upham.

For more information regarding upcoming programs, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.