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How Much is That Leak Costing You?

By Jim Trog, CIA, CIC



The EPA WaterSense program promotes a week every year as “Fix a Leak Week”. This year, Fix a Leak Week falls on the week of March 15 – 21. Each year, nearly one trillion gallons of water are lost due to leaks in plumbing and irrigation systems nationwide. Most of this water is lost a drop at a time, which is why the average person doesn’t realize just what those drops are costing. To better quantify those numbers, let’s put a few things in perspective and then do a little math.

Take a typical 1” sprinkler valve that operates a set of pop up sprinklers. When that valve operates, it may easily flow at a rate of 20 gallons per minute (gpm). If this same valve developed a problem and it did not close entirely at the end of its cycle, it could easily “seep” at a rate of 1gpm. Of course, 1gpm doesn’t sound like much water, but the 60 gallons that are lost after an hour, or the 1440 gallons that are gone after a day or the 43,200 gallons that are wasted after the first month really starts to add up. Look at it another way; that is enough water to cover an acre of land with roughly 1 ½” of water or fill 4 average size swimming pools. Does that get your attention? Given the water loss in this example, and assuming the average cost of water is \$3.75 per 1000 gallons (a conservative figure), this leak could cost \$162.00 each month. That is if the leak is only 1 gallon per minute.

How do we know if we have a leak? The best way is to check the utility’s water meter. Take a time when you know that no water is running and see if the dials

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on the meter are turning. If they are, you definitely are leaking water somewhere. If the dials appear stationary, then write down the current numbers shown on the meter and then come back in an hour and check again. If the numbers are the same, then your system should be in good shape.

Next time you get an estimate to repair a leak, whether it is for the plumbing system on your house or the irrigation system in your yard; don’t just ask yourself if you can afford the repair. Ask yourself if you can afford the leak!

For more information on “Fix a Leak Week”, check out http://www.epa.gov/watersense/water_efficiency/fix_a_leak.html

Spring Time is Aphid Time!

Spring time is Aphid time in the Valley. Aphids are small bugs that host on a variety of plants, sucking the life out of them. Normally green, black or red in color, these small insects can be found on the underside of the leaves and on the green stems. Aphids will start from eggs left on stems of plants which hatch in late winter to early spring where they begin their work.

Being proactive and checking plants and trees randomly for signs of Aphids will help to reduce the damage. A systemic pesticide can be applied in



Aphids will attack a plant by attaching to the underside of the leaves sucking the life out of them.

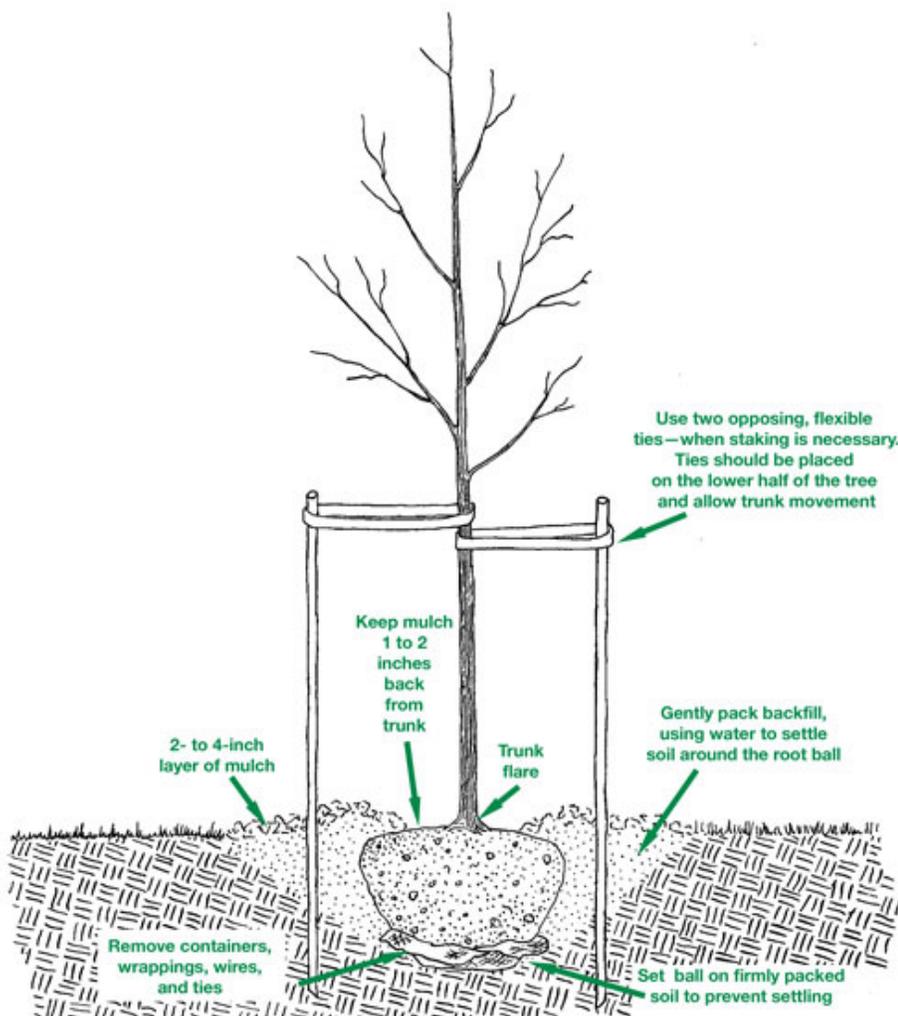
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Tree Planting, the ISA Way

By Gary McCunn, Certified Arborist WE-7255A



Planting is where it all starts for a tree. It can only go one of two ways from here. Either in a good way and the tree will grow into a strong healthy tree or a bad way and the tree is not with us for long. I have been called out to look at hundreds of trees all over the valley that are sick and may end up dying. By the time I am called out it is often too late for the tree and the issues have compounded. Over 90% of the time the original problem was the tree was planted too deep. Below is a diagram with detailed information on how a tree should be planted.



1. **Dig a shallow, broad planting hole:** Since roots on trees grow out, not deep, it is a lot easier for them to get started.
2. **Identify the trunk flare:** The trunk flare is where the roots spread at the base of the tree. The trunk flare should always be above the soil line, remember the roots need soil the trunk does not.
3. **Fill the hole gently but firmly:** Gently but firmly pack the dirt around the tree as you cover the roots. Be careful not to cover the root flare with dirt. You may need to use water as you are planting to help get all the air pockets out.
4. **Stake the tree, if necessary:** If the tree was grown at the nursery without a stake you shouldn't need one at the time of planting. However; due to the high winds in Arizona you may need stakes for the first year.
5. **Provide follow up care:** Keep the soil moist but not soaked, minor pruning only if there were branches damaged during planting. You should hold off on any other pruning until after the first year. At a year's time, light structural trimming is usually sufficient and you should be able to remove the stakes.

Always make sure that the species of tree you choose will fit the need you are looking for. Potential size, litter and growth habits are other important traits that need to be considered.

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March to help control potential problems. Systemic pesticides are applied to the roots of the plant by drenching the soil with a chemical and water mixture or applying a granular product and watering it in. The plant takes in the chemical where it resides in the leaves for insects to ingest. This process does take a day or so to become affective and should never be done on food type plants. These products are available at your local Home Stores and can be in found with a combination of fertilizer or plant food also. Make sure that you always follow the product label. If you find plants with aphids currently on them then you can apply some eco-friendly methods of control. Lady Bugs are natural predators to Aphids. Releasing Lady Bugs on plants in your yard will help



Lady Bugs pictured here are natural predators and can provide some control for Aphids and other damaging insects in the landscape.

control detrimental insects and can be fun for the kids to release. Also, you can try spraying off the bugs with water or apply an insecticidal soap which will normally eliminate existing Aphids. Insecticidal soaps such as Safer Soap can be found at your local Home Store. Again, make sure that you follow the label for any pesticide products and check the underside of plant leaves every few days.



MONTHLY LANDSCAPE CHECKLIST

Plant Renovation List (Common Type Plants)

- ✓ Asparagus Fern
- ✓ Cascalote
- ✓ Mt. Lemon Marigold
- ✓ Thevetia (Yellow Oleander)
- ✓ Baccharis Centennial if not renovated in February
- ✓ Bougainvillea if not renovated in February
- ✓ Lantana if not renovated in February
- ✓ Yellow Bells if not renovated in February
- ✓ Orange Jubilee in not renovated in February
- ✓ Verbena if not renovated in February

General Irrigation Setting (Actual times will vary depending on the precipitation rate of your system)

- ✓ Rye Grass Turf irrigated using typical pop-up sprinklers: 6 – 9 minutes twice per week.
- ✓ Dormant Bermuda Turf: Water once every few weeks to one time a month for a few minutes just to keep some moisture in the soil for the

stolons.

- ✓ Drip irrigation for Plants: 10 – 14 minutes one time per week.
- ✓ Drip irrigation for Trees: 12 – 22 minutes one time per week.

Please remember that these are general recommendations and depending on your system you may need to adjust watering times up or down. Also, if we do receive rain then irrigation can be suspended until the soil dries. Based on the amount of rain received in the past few months, irrigation could remain off for the first couple weeks of March, especially if any additional rainfall is received.

Turf Fertilization for the Rye Grass should be completed once every six to eight weeks on average using fertilizer containing at least 16–20% Nitrogen. Apply following the label and make sure to water in for a few minutes after application.