

# Looking after trees

What can one practically do to a tree to improve it's health once the tree has been planted:

- 1) Water the tree. Recent spring and summers have been very hot and dry. Indeed many recent winters have been relatively dry. There is little point in watering a tree before spring when trees come out of winter dormancy. Similarly, there is little point in watering during wet weather conditions. However, if it has been dry and hot, do water trees! It is not necessary to only use water from taps. Water gathered in water butts and elsewhere will also be very helpful! Even dirty washing up water or bath water will do the tree a lot more good than harm-just ensure the water is cool and not too much washing up liquid/soap within. Water with the equivalent of at least 4 watering cans per week. It is unlikely that you will over-water a tree!
- 2) Put mulch the base of the tree. Ideally mulch takes the form of a carpet of woodchips or leaves approx. 3" thick at the base of fallen trees. Such a carpet of leaves/woodchip should extend out to approx. 1 metre from the base of the trunk. Try to remove any weeds at the base of the tree first. Try not to let the mulch touch the tree trunk or the tree can think it is being buried and will send out shallow roots from the base of the trunk which are more prone to wither and die. Such mulch will not only reduce surface temperatures and the rate of water evaporation during hot/dry weather but will also reduce weed competition. As the leaves/mulch breaks down, it will also release nutrients into the soil which tree roots will utilise.
- 3) As trees establish and grow, the tree ties can become tight and restricting. One should be able to get ones fingernails under a tree tie. Any tighter than this and the tree loses its ability to transport water and nutrients up and down from the crown to the roots. This should be reported to the Glos Highway Trees Officer (08000, 514 514) if it is a street tree or CBC Trees Officer (07769877059) if the tree is in a park or open space. However, if you are able, release the tree by loosening the tie and reattaching more loosely.
- 4) Parts of the tree can be damaged by rubbing against the supporting stake and/or cage. This should be adjusted so it no longer rubs. Again, if necessary contact the appropriate trees officer. Using a pair of elasticated tights can be a very useful aid to attach a tree to a stake/cage etc.



5) If water pools at the base of a tree for long periods, the soil is not freely draining. This is likely as a result of compaction. Do not thrust a garden fork into the ground as there may be shallow electric or fibre optic cable close to the surface. Contact the trees officer and ideally attach photographs [highways@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@gloucestershire.gov.uk) or [trees@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:trees@cheltenham.gov.uk)

6) Sometimes trees can be perceived to be causing a nuisance by dropping squishy/slippery fruit/leaves onto the adjacent pavement. Ideally, these should be removed so the trees is most appreciated by as many people as possible. If the volume of leaves/fruit is too much, contact CBC Cleansing Dept and request the area receives special cleaning attention (01242 262626).

7) Generally, if you have concerns regarding a public tree, contact Glos Highways or Borough Council Trees Officer

The more care and attention a tree receives in the first few years of its life, the better the mature specimen the tree is likely to become!

