TOYOTA | EVERGREEN
LEARNING GROUNDS
Imagine your city with nature

Shade for Kids: Fact Sheet 6

Tree Care Guide

Caring for your trees is crucial for their survival. This includes:

- Mulching
- Watering
- Weeding
- Trimming and pruning
- Protecting

Photo: Bruce Day

Mulching

Mulch is magic. It keeps roots cool, retains moisture, protects roots from foot traffic, reduces erosion and soil compaction, prevents run-off and improves the organic content of the soil. Bonus: It also keeps down weeds.

Apply ½ a cubic yard (3 full wheelbarrows) of wood mulch to your trees, 10-15cm deep to a radius of 1m from the base of new trees. For older trees, mulch out to the drip line to ensure you are protecting the tree's root system. Top up the mulch around your trees every year.

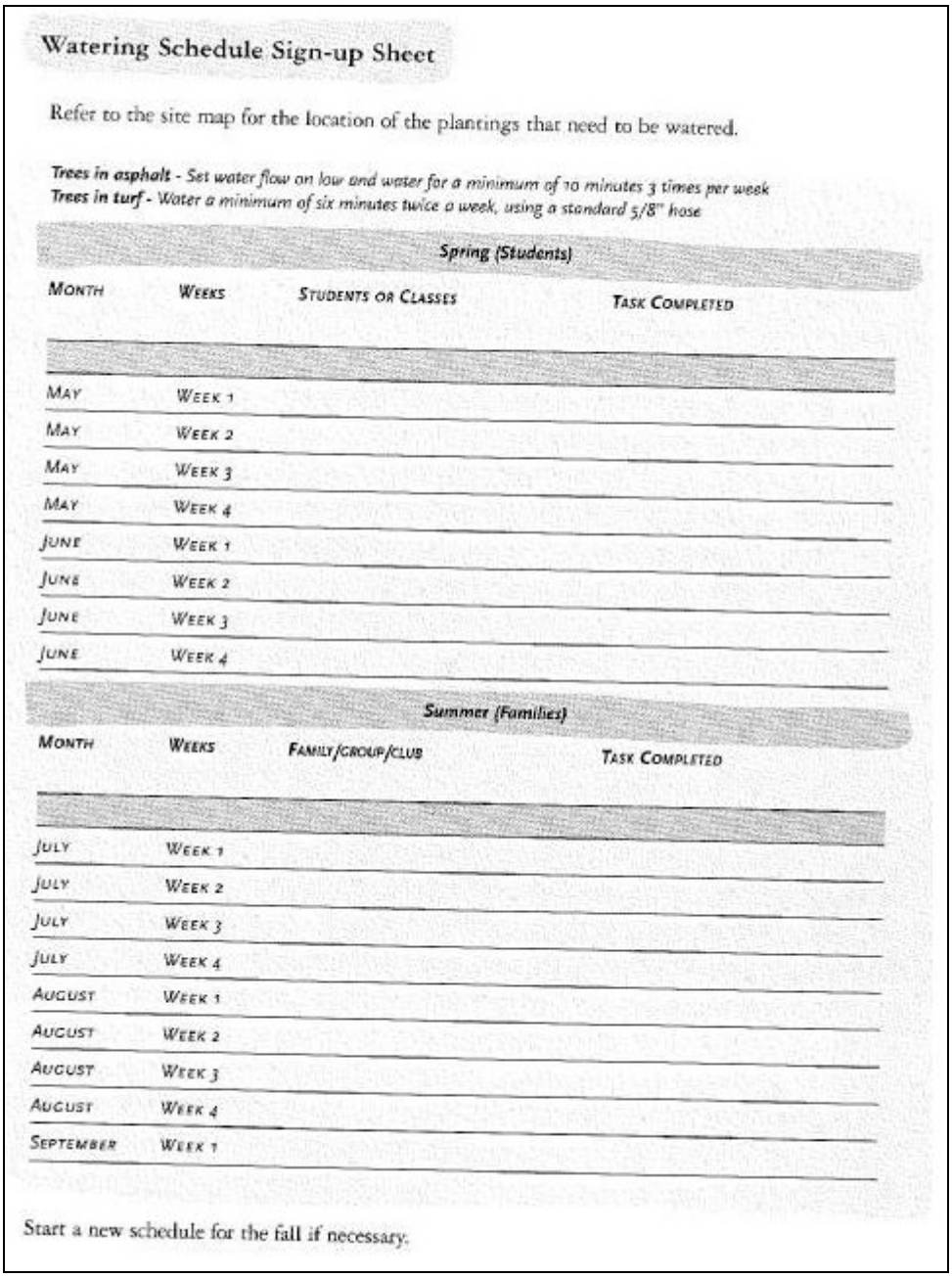
Tip: Not all mulch is created equal. The wood chips (i.e., pine bark) sold at most nurseries will wash away from the base of trees and often end up covering storm sewers on school grounds – something your maintenance staff will not appreciate! Tub-ground mulch is a wood mulch product that has been ground down into a fine fibrous material, and is recommended for school greening projects. Don't forget to leave your leaves! They are the best natural fertilizer.

Watering

Trees will need summer watering until they become established – approximately three years. Give your new trees a deep watering during June, July, August and September. Give established trees a drink during dry periods. Watering requirements will vary depending on the size of the tree and whether the water is soaking in or running off, but here are some basic guidelines to get you started.

- For watering in turf – water each tree for a minimum of six minutes twice a week, using a standard 5/8" hose.
- For trees planted in asphalt, set water flow on low and water for a minimum of 10 minutes three times per week.

Below is a sample watering schedule.



Watering Schedule Sign-up Sheet

Refer to the site map for the location of the plantings that need to be watered.

Trees in asphalt *- Set water flow on low and water for a minimum of 10 minutes 3 times per week*
Trees in turf *- Water a minimum of six minutes twice a week, using a standard 5/8" hose*

Spring (Students)

Month	Weeks	Students or Classes	Task Completed
May	Week 1		
May	Week 2		
May	Week 3		
May	Week 4		
June	Week 1		
June	Week 2		
June	Week 3		
June	Week 4		

Summer (Families)

Month	Weeks	Family/Group/Club	Task Completed
July	Week 1		
July	Week 2		
July	Week 3		
July	Week 4		
August	Week 1		
August	Week 2		
August	Week 3		
August	Week 4		
September	Week 1		

Start a new schedule for the fall if necessary.

Tip: Get some 5 gallon white bakery pails (free) and punch a hole or a few holes in the bottom of them. Place a pail at each tree. Go around to each tree with your hose and fill the bucket. The water will soak into the ground from the bucket, watering your trees and saving you time, money and energy!

Weeding

As with any gardening project, weeding is a fact of life. Mulching annually will help control weeds, as will leaf matter.

Tip: Try planting ground cover like wild strawberry or nasturtium, or spreading vegetables like squash around the base of your new trees to help control weeds!

Pruning

In many school boards, grounds staff prune established trees. Check with your board to see who's responsibility this is so you can plan accordingly. With newly-planted trees, remove only broken or badly damaged branches.

Tree Protection

If you're concerned that your new trees may suffer from vandalism or wear and tear from children, protect the trunk with one of the following techniques.

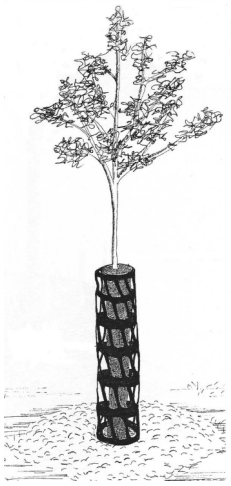
1. Wire mesh caging

Photo: Bruce Day

Recommended for active play areas, this type of cage can stay around a tree for about 10 years before you remove it.

- Use 10 gauge galvanized welded 2" x 2" wire mesh for the cage at a height of 1.5m.
- Use three regular T bars that are 2m long, evenly spaced around the tree about 30cm out from the trunk.
- Overlap the required amount of wire mesh by three squares, but make sure the overlap is located between the T bars. This ensures the cage will remain round and will not leave a sharp point along the T bar.
- The bottom of the cage should be 15cm above ground so you can weed, mulch and clean out garbage.
- The tops of the T bars should be below the top of the mesh.

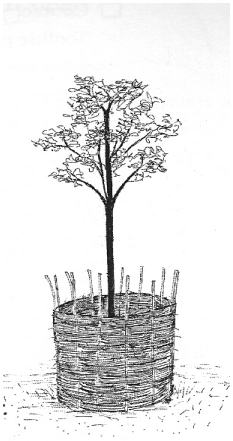
2. Plastic snow fencing



This method is a cost-effective strategy to protect trees from the rigours of children's play (i.e. holding the trunk as they run circles around the tree!).

- Wrap trees with biodegradable burlap (no nylon in it) to the first set of branches. This protects the bark from vandalism and frost damage.
- Use the 1.2m high wide-banded plastic snow fence (green, brown or black) and apply it over the burlap in 60cm strips.
- Ensure the fencing is tied together, yet loose around the tree.
- Excess fencing can be adjusted to accommodate trunk expansion in three years.

3. Woven tree baskets



This technique involves weaving a basket structure around the trees, creating a natural protective barrier.

- Use willow, grape vines or dogwood for variation in colour.
- Add mulch both inside and around the basket to a depth of 10 to 15cm.

4. Stones in a circle

- Build the circle approximately 2m in diameter around the trunk.
- Fill this area with mulch (10-15cm deep), native grasses and perennials, or sunflowers and nasturtium.

- Make sure the stones are placed on a solid base, not on the mulch where they can roll or shift.
- Ensure stones are large and heavy enough so they cannot be moved or thrown.

Resources

Designing for Shade and Energy Conservation. 2004. TDSB and Evergreen.

Evergreen's website: www.evergreen.ca