

the dirt



FALL 2022 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

Tending to trees.

Tips to keeping them healthy during drought.

Trees are an investment and valuable resource, with some taking 20 to 30 years to mature. When faced with calls to save water, don't scrimp on giving them what they need.

Trees in irrigated landscapes become dependent on regular watering. When that is curtailed or stopped completely, they can become stressed and die.

This is a costly problem, not only in expensive tree removal, but in the loss of the many benefits trees provide: cooling and cleaning the air; providing shade to landscapes, which reduces water needs; shading homes and walkways; and increasing property value.

Follow these tips recommended by California ReLeaf.org for proper tree care during droughts:

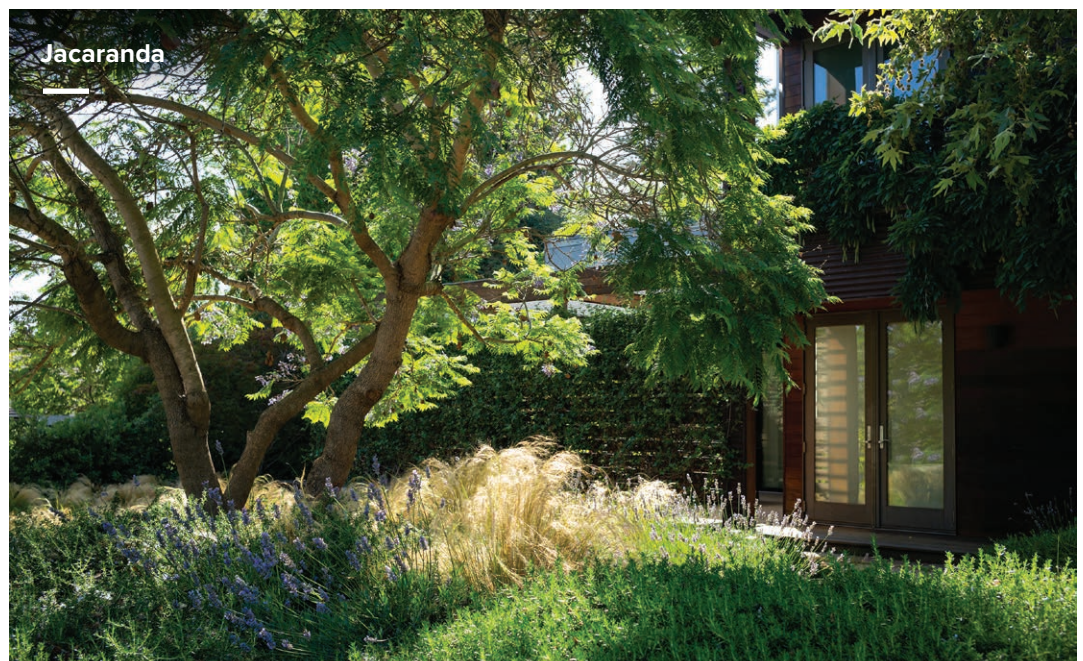
- **For established trees, slowly soak the root zone beneath the drip line**—the area under the farthest reaches of the branches—until water soaks 12 to 18 inches below the surface and

extends outward to reach the feeder roots. Water every 10 to 14 days.

- **Use a soaker hose**, a sprinkler attachment on a low setting, or install bubblers or other systems. If you choose to install a drip system, monitor it to make sure it's working, and add emitters to the tree's root zone before increasing water.
- **The roots of young trees are located mostly near the trunk.** Young trees need 5 gallons of water two to four times per week. Create a small watering basin with a berm of dirt. Another method is to drill a small hole near

Trees

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Something to chew on.



Shelly Trainor

Shelly Trainor | Master Gardener Speaker

She's been a mechanical design engineer, IT consultant, marketing manager and high school math teacher. Now retired, Shelly Trainor is a University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener speaker, who finds magic in growing her own fruits and vegetables. "To this day, I am thrilled to see a seedling sprout—and I marvel at picking and using the fruits and vegetables that result from that tiny seed and seedling."

Why is edible gardening so popular right now?

Trainor: It's a variety of things: social media and its ease of sharing successes, ideas, and instruction—and the pandemic's focus on being home, which inspired people to get started.

What's the best way to do that?

Trainor: Start small and expand gradually. Follow these tips for success:

- Pick a location with at least six hours of full sun every day.
- Prepare the soil for drainage and nutrients.
- Establish a method to deliver water to the soil, not plant leaves.
- Pick plants that are sized appropriately and right for the season.

What are some common mistakes?

Trainor: The most common is overwatering. Others include not having full sun, not encouraging pollinators, lack of regular attention and over-fertilizing.

Any tips on managing pests?

Trainor: As a Master Gardener, I regularly address the concept of Integrated Pest Management, which is focused on tactics that are the least harmful to people and the environment. Start with a healthy environment for your

plants with sun, water, soil and seasonality. Physically remove pests, encourage natural predators, and use naturally-occurring substances such as iron phosphate, soaps, pyrethrins, oils, and bacterials before pesticides.

What are some good resources for more information?

Trainor: UCCE Master Gardeners of Orange County offers ongoing classes and events, and a variety of resources on their website at mgorange.ucanr.edu. They also staff an email hotline at ucceocmghotline@ucanr.edu.

If you send an email, be sure to include a full description of your concern, along with photos.



Heart-leaved penstemon,
Keckiella cordifolia

Time to water less.

Plants don't need as much water in the fall.

Don't let the heat fool you. September is the time to dial down on the watering of your landscape by about 30%.

The days are getting shorter and with less sun, the plants are starting to go into a period of rest or metabolic inactivity, so they need less water. This doesn't mean you should stop watering altogether. Instead, reduce your watering times to about two days per week.

Remember, plants and trees just spent the summer months putting all their time and energy into growing leaves and flowers, and then producing fruits and seeds. They use autumn to take better care of their root systems by building them up and spreading them out.

Later this season, daylight saving time will end. When you move your clock back Nov. 6, dial down your sprinkler timer, too—and reduce your water use for the cool, wet months. Let's all work together for water efficiency!



Trees

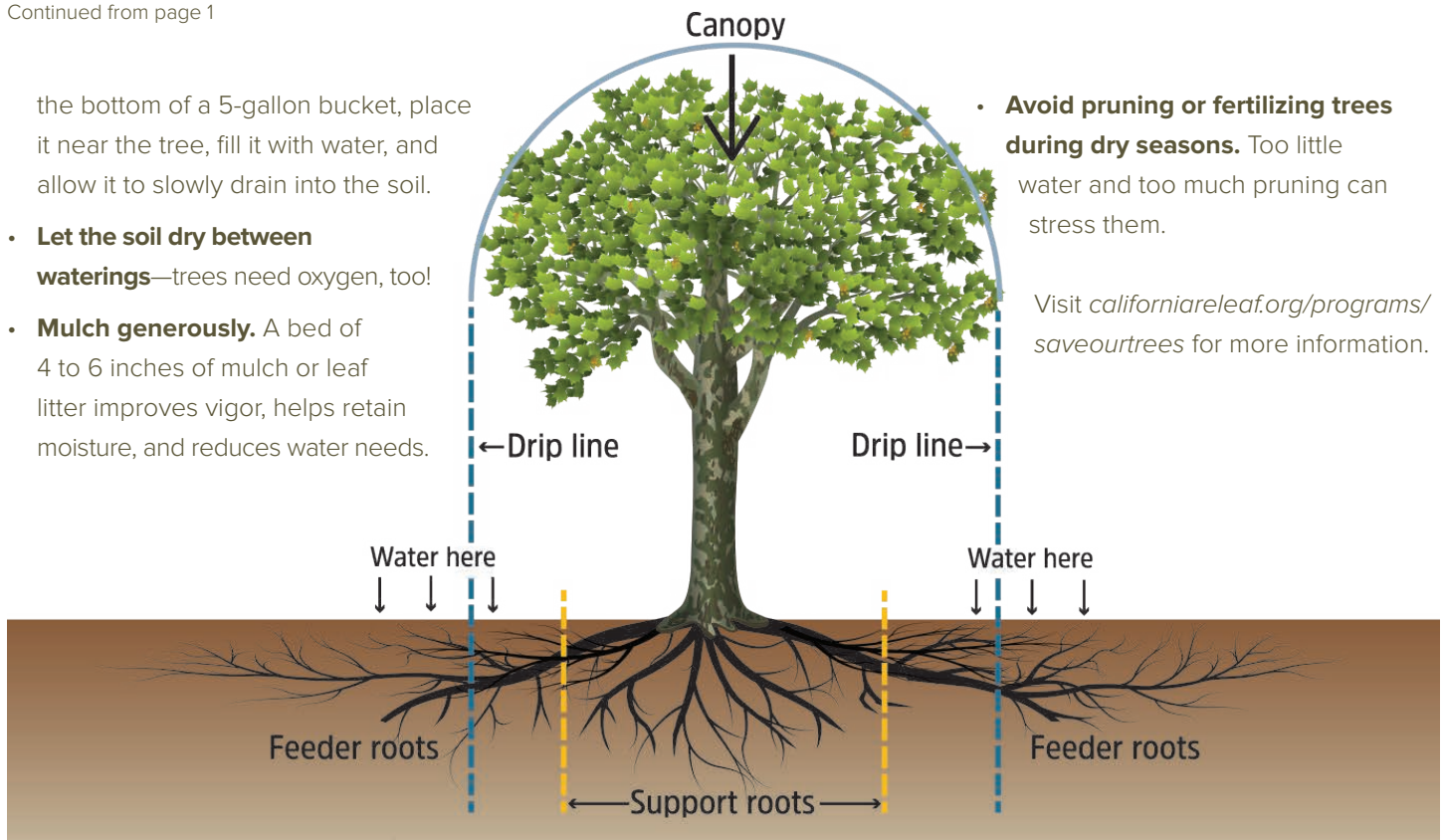
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the bottom of a 5-gallon bucket, place it near the tree, fill it with water, and allow it to slowly drain into the soil.

- **Let the soil dry between waterings**—trees need oxygen, too!
- **Mulch generously.** A bed of 4 to 6 inches of mulch or leaf litter improves vigor, helps retain moisture, and reduces water needs.

- **Avoid pruning or fertilizing trees during dry seasons.** Too little water and too much pruning can stress them.

Visit californiareleaf.org/programs/saveoutrees for more information.





Juan's tip of the season.

Fall into planting

Late fall is the perfect time to plant California natives and other plants.

Soils are still warm enough to encourage root growth. As winter rains arrive, this will help them develop deep and fibrous roots to get them through the winter and ready for spring's flush of new growth.

Inspect your landscape to see what needs tending to. Create a plant list and check with your local nurseries to see what's in stock. Once that's done—it's time to start planting!

Looking ahead.

Your garden to-do list

- **September – Dial it back:** Whether you water by hand or with an irrigation system, reduce your watering by at least 30%. Check for irrigation leaks, while you're at it.
- **October – Prune, weed, mulch:** Give your garden a makeover following a hot summer. Check for pruning needs, remove weeds by hand, and apply at least 3 inches of mulch.
- **November – Food for winter:** Once you finish your late fall planting, spread some organic fertilizer to help plants build a strong root system to get them hardy for winter.



Want a beautiful California-friendly garden? Landscape guru Juan Garcia will show you the way at IRWD.com/ShedShow.

Tap our online resources

Visit IRWD.com/rightscape for rebates to help offset the cost of turf removal, weather-based irrigation controllers, efficient sprinkler heads, drip kits and more. Plus, check out our plant database at RightScapeResources.com.

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