

Newly Planted Tree Care - Practical Checklist

Use this checklist to keep a new tree alive and thriving through the first season - clear steps for watering, mulch, staking, pruning, and stress checks, plus a simple climate-based irrigation planner.

First 30 Days Watering

Right after planting, slow-soak the root zone until the ball is evenly moist.

Week 1 - water every 2 - 3 days; Weeks 2 - 4 - water twice per week; adjust for rain and soil drainage.

Target 5 - 10 gallons per session for a 1 - 2 inch caliper tree; larger trees need more.

Mulch & Soil Surface

Apply a 2 - 3 inch mulch ring over the planting area to reduce evaporation.

Keep mulch a few inches off the trunk - no volcano mounds.

Top up mulch mid-season if it thins out.

Staking & Wind Protection

Stake only if the tree is tall, in a windy site, or if the root ball is unstable.

Use soft, wide ties; do not girdle. Remove staking after about 12 months.

For very windy sites, consider temporary wind screens for the first weeks.

Pruning & Fertilizing

Do not fertilize at planting. Wait until the next season unless a soil test says otherwise.

Prune only dead, broken, or rubbing branches in the first year.

Focus energy on rooting, not top growth.

Stress Monitoring

Daily for the first week, then weekly: check leaves/needles for wilting, yellowing, or scorch.

Probe soil 3 - 4 inches deep - if it is dry and crumbly, water; if soggy, pause and improve drainage.

Check trunk ties so they do not rub or constrict.

Irrigation Planner by Weather

Cool - wet week: 0 - 1 extra watering; confirm soil moisture first.

Average week: 2 deep waterings spaced out.

Hot - dry week: 3 deep waterings; add a fourth for sandy soils or strong winds.

Trunk, Roots & Soil Care

Keep the trunk guard or wrap only if needed for sunscald or critter damage; remove before it binds.

Prevent soil compaction around the root zone - no parking or heavy foot traffic.

If water ponds, add shallow outlets or loosen the top few inches with a hand fork - avoid damaging roots.

Seasonal Care & Winter

In late fall, one final deep soak before the ground freezes if the season is dry.

For evergreens, consider burlap wind screens on exposed sites.

Remove leaves and debris that touch the trunk to deter pests.

Warranty & Care Log

Keep the installer's invoice, planting date, and warranty terms in one place.

Record watering dates and notes about weather and stress signs - helps with warranty claims and adjustments.

Take monthly photos for growth tracking.