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**THE "VITACARE" COMPANY  
MORGAN TREE SERVICE**

## It's Summertime! Water Your Trees!

As I am putting the final touches on this summer edition of this letter we have been more than a few weeks into a significant rainfall shortage. While droughts can occur at various times of the year, it is in the long days of the summer months that the combination of disappearing rain-loaded frontal systems and long hot hours of soil moisture evaporation place a special stress on important plants, including established trees.

Big trees do not take care of themselves. They need help also when weeks go by without significant rain. Unlike smaller plants, large trees are not so easily replaced and they can be stressed beyond a point of no return at which they become endemically susceptible to a plethora of other troubles.

**How to do it?** Unfortunately, most irrigation systems that are installed primarily for lawns, shrubberies and ornamental beds are not set to properly water large established trees. In fact, frequent applications (e.g. every other day) of short periods of water (e.g. fifteen minutes) can do as much harm as good for your big trees. In clay soils that need to breathe and aerate, too little water applied too often is tantamount to placing a plastic bag over your head, cinching it at the neck and expecting you to do just fine. The top inch or so that gets wet and stays wet blocks gas exchange.

Instead, water only weekly during periods of less than an inch of rain. Apply water slowly to a given area for two-three hours, allowing it to soak in rather than run off downhill or into the gutter. Soaker hoses set out in circles in the **outer (radial) half of the dripline** work well for this purpose. Sprinklers, even when properly placed, very often apply water too rapidly. As a result, much of it is wasted. And whatever you use, try to keep the water off the trunks as much as possible. Not much can be taken up there and extended periods of wetness at the collar, especially when it is covered with vines, dense shrubberies, etc., can also encourage the beginning of various root rot diseases.

## Did you Know . . .

. . . that plants growing in mostly shady environments adapt to minimal amounts of sunlight by growing large, thin, and widely-spaced leaves that have thin cell walls, with usually only a single epidermal layer of cells at the surface. Such leaves are able to make maximum use of limited light. In the nursery, shade-grown plants usually grow more rapidly than plants in the sun, but often have reduced trunk caliper and smaller root systems.

*Arboriculture*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Harris, Clark and Matheny

. . . that the International Society of Arboriculture's Certified Arborist Training Program is increasingly becoming the accepted standard for practitioners within most areas of tree care across the country and now, internationally. Credentials earned via this program ensure that knowledgeable and competent technicians are present on your property. You should look for the Certified Arborist logo associated with a company's advertising whenever you solicit tree work.



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