

## Maturity

If you have mature trees in your yard, many of them will not need much (if any) water during the summer months ahead.

“Because the root systems of older trees are spread out, they’re able to pull moisture out of the ground water over a bigger area,” said Bill Schall, Palm Beach County extension agent. “They can usually make it through these drought periods.”

However, should you notice leaves on a tree wilting, turning grayish or yellowing, these could be signs of drought stress. Evergreen needles may turn yellow, red, or purple or the tips may turn brown. But be aware that these signs may indicate other problems as well as drought.

“If you saw that the leaves were starting to wilt, the soil might be compacted or you might have a root rot problem,” Schall said. “Normally, during the summer rainy season, you don’t need to water trees at all.”

The majority of water-absorbing tree roots in southern Florida are located in the top few inches of the soil. Applying  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch of water from the trunk out to the dripline (the outer edges of the tree’s branches) during each application insures moisture penetration down about a foot in our sandy soils. Be sure to water slowly enough for the water to soak in. On really older trees, you may want to extend the watering area because mature tree roots can extend well beyond the dripline.

"Watering methods matter as well," said Bruce Adams, water conservation officer at the South Florida Water Management District. "Overhead spraying of tree leaves is inefficient and can promote disease. Drip or trickle systems are best because they apply water precisely where it is needed without waste."

Even during water restrictions, Adams assures homeowners that they can adequately water newly planted trees during the 30-day establishment period. After that, check on the current water restrictions for allowances for hand-watering.

“Just make sure that you water slowly so the water percolates down into the soil and doesn’t just run off,” Schall added.

If you have questions about any of these Water Smart techniques, call the South Florida Water Management District at 561-686-8800 or the Palm Beach County Extension Master Gardener Hotline at 561-233-1750.