



BALLARD ENTERPRISES | Post-Installation Care Guide

Thank you for choosing Ballard Enterprises. Proper care during the first few months after installation is critical to long-term success. The recommendations below are designed to help your new installation establish strong roots and thrive for years to come.

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Trees & Shrubs

The Simple Rule

Water based on soil moisture, not the calendar alone. Pull back the mulch and check the soil near the root ball 3 to 6 inches deep. If the soil feels dry or only slightly cool, water thoroughly. If it feels wet, sticky, or soggy, wait and check again later.

The goal is evenly moist soil, not soggy soil. Overwatering can damage roots just as quickly as underwatering.

Helpful Tool: Soil Moisture Probe

A simple long-probe, moisture-only soil meter can help you check the root zone before watering. Insert the probe near the root ball, check several spots around the plant, and use the reading as a guide along with your own observation.

We recommend a simple moisture-only meter rather than a multi-function pH/light/moisture meter. For accurate pH or fertility information, a proper soil test is the better tool.

First 1-2 Weeks After Planting

Water daily unless the soil is already wet or the area received a heavy soaking rain. Use a slow, gentle application of water directly over the root ball and surrounding planting area. A slow trickle from a hose, watering wand, drip system, watering bag, or Tree Diaper is better than a quick blast from a nozzle.

Weeks 3-12 After Planting

Water every 2-3 days during normal conditions. During hot, dry, windy weather, plants may need water more often. During cool, cloudy, rainy, or shaded conditions, they may need less. Always check the soil before watering.

Do not rely only on light rain. A brief shower may wet the mulch and surface soil without reaching the root zone.

After 12 Weeks

Water weekly during dry periods until the plant is established. Shrubs often establish faster than trees, but both still need attention through the first growing season. Trees, larger shrubs, and evergreens may need supplemental watering for more than one season, especially during drought or extreme heat.

Once established, most plants only need supplemental water during extended heat, drought, or unusually dry fall weather.

How Much Water?

Water slowly enough that it soaks in instead of running off. The amounts below are general starting points. Soil type, slope, drainage, plant size, sun exposure, wind, and recent rainfall may change what is needed.

Plant Type	General Watering Amount
Newly planted shrubs	About 1/4 to 1/3 of the original container volume per watering
Newly planted trees	About 1 to 1.5 gallons per inch of trunk diameter per watering
Larger trees or dry sites	May need more water applied slowly over a wider area

Example: A tree with a 2-inch trunk diameter may need roughly 2-3 gallons per watering, applied slowly.

Where to Water

Focus on the root ball and the surrounding soil. During the first few weeks, the original root ball can dry out faster than the surrounding soil, so it needs special attention. As roots begin growing outward, gradually widen the watering area around the plant.

For trees, do not only water at the trunk. Water the root zone around the tree where new roots are trying to grow.

Mulch Matters

Mulch helps hold moisture, reduce weeds, moderate soil temperature, and protect trunks and stems from mower or string-trimmer damage. A 2-3 inch layer of organic mulch is ideal for most new plantings.

Keep mulch pulled back slightly from the trunk or stems. Do not pile mulch against the plant. Volcano mulching can hold moisture against the bark, reduce oxygen around roots, and create long-term health problems.

Watering Bags, Tree Diapers, and Slow-Release Devices

If a watering bag, Tree Diaper, or slow-release watering device was installed, fill or soak it according to the product instructions and actual site conditions. These tools are helpful because they release water slowly into the root zone, but they still need to be monitored. Longer, slower watering is best for these devices.

In hot, dry weather, they may need to be filled more often. In wet weather, they may not be needed as frequently. Do not assume the device is working perfectly. Check the soil under and around it.

Signs Your Plant May Need Water

- Wilting leaves
- Curling leaves
- Browning leaf edges
- Early leaf drop
- Dry soil below the mulch
- Dieback at branch tips

Signs of Too Much Water

- Yellowing leaves
- Wilting even though the soil is wet
- Mushy or sour-smelling soil
- Standing water around the plant
- Leaf drop with consistently wet soil

When in doubt, check the soil before adding more water.

Seasonal Notes

Spring and Fall: Plants may need less frequent watering because temperatures are cooler, but do not ignore them. Dry spring or fall weather can still stress new plantings.

Summer: Hot, dry, or windy weather increases water demand. Check new plantings frequently. Morning watering is ideal because it reduces evaporation and allows foliage to dry during the day.

Winter: Do not water when the ground is frozen. However, new evergreens and recently installed plants may benefit from occasional watering during dry winter periods when the soil is not frozen. This is especially important before the ground freezes in late fall or during mild dry stretches.

After 120 Days and Beyond

After the first 120 days, your plants should be on their way to establishment, but they are not automatically finished. Continue to monitor soil moisture, especially during heat, drought, and dry fall weather.

This is also a good time to consider a proper plant health care program, including pruning, fertilization, insect monitoring, disease monitoring, and soil care. Flowering shrubs are usually pruned after blooming or during dormancy, depending on the plant.

Fertilizers, insecticides, and fungicides should only be used when appropriate and always according to the product label. Using the wrong product, wrong timing, or wrong rate can harm the plant or create unnecessary environmental risk. If you would like help with a long-term plant health care plan, Ballard Enterprises would be happy to help.

Sod

Days 0-15

Keep the sod consistently moist. Water at least once daily with approximately 3/4 inch of water each application, increasing frequency during hot, sunny, or windy weather. Verify moisture reaches the soil beneath the sod. Do not mow or fertilize during this initial establishment period.

Days 15-30

Water approximately 1/2 inch daily while encouraging deeper rooting. Mow only as needed once rooting has begun, and never remove more than one-third of the blade height at a time.

30 Days and Beyond

Water approximately twice per week, providing at least 1 inch of water weekly. Fertilizer, weed control, and fungicide programs may begin no sooner than six weeks after installation.

Tips for Success

Proper watering is the single most important factor in establishing healthy sod. If you do not have irrigation, consider using a quality sprinkler and hose timer for consistent watering. Adjust for rainfall, heat, shade, wind, and drainage.

Hydroseed

Days 1-10

Allow the hydroseed to dry for 12-24 hours before the first watering. Then keep the area consistently moist, but not saturated, by watering two to three times per day. Short, frequent watering is usually better than flooding the area.

Days 10-21

Water at least once daily, or twice during hot weather, ensuring moisture reaches the developing root zone. Avoid foot traffic and do not mow or fertilize.

3-4 Weeks and Beyond

Begin mowing as needed once the lawn is established. Continue providing approximately 1 inch of water weekly and begin fertilizer or weed control programs no sooner than six weeks after installation.

Tips for Success

Consistent moisture is the key to successful germination. Avoid allowing the area to dry out or become waterlogged. Heavy rain, steep slopes, erosion, and foot traffic can all affect results.

Questions & Warranty Reminder

These instructions are a strong general guide, but every property is different. Be observant, check soil moisture regularly, and adjust watering based on your actual site conditions.

If something does not look right, contact Ballard Enterprises early. Small problems are much easier to correct than plants or turf that have been struggling for weeks. Please refer to the Ballard Enterprises Warranty Policy for complete warranty information.