

Winter Watering Tips



Plants need a lot less water during the fall and winter, but may need a deep soak during extended dry times.

Know your soil

Clay soils are sticky while sandy soils feel gritty. If you have a clay soil, less frequent, slow watering is best to completely soak the soil. Sandy soils may need more frequent watering since they drain quickly. Always check your soil for moisture before turning on the water, too much water can cause root rot and kill plants.

Prepare plants for winter weather

Always maintain a thick layer of mulch around trees, shrubs and in flower beds. Mulch retains soil moisture, prevents erosion, and can increase soil quality over time. Use organic mulches that decompose like woodchips and shredded bark.



Maintain a layer of mulch to protect roots

Avoid mulches that create a packed layer since they do not allow good air and water exchange, such as grass clippings and leaves that have not been shredded.

Keep winter sensitive plants in mind

Winter annuals like pansies, fall-established lawns, newly-planted trees and shrubs, and evergreens are the most susceptible to winter damage from low moisture. Young trees and shrubs have a root system only as large as the container from the nursery. Pay special attention to soil moisture during the winter to keep this small area moist.

Consider planting Oklahoma tough plants that can survive extreme temperature and precipitation changes. Check out SqueezeEveryDrop.com for lists of water smart plants.

Water low and slow

Trees, shrubs, perennials, and evergreens are best watered from slow-soaking garden hose, since it gets the water down to the root zone. Large lawn

areas can be watered with an automatic irrigation system or a hose sprinkler. Only water when the soil is dry and temperatures are above freezing.

Prepare your irrigation system for the cold

Protect your system by winterizing your backflow after the last good soak with your automatic irrigation system.

1. Start by turning off the isolation valve to the sprinkler system.
2. Next, turn the brass ball valves on the backflow prevention device to the off position.
3. Using a flat-headed screw-driver, release any water that is still in the backflow prevention unit.
4. Turn the brass ball valves into a half-off, half-on position. This allows any trapped water to be released.

Install a rain/freeze sensor that will automatically turn off your system during freezing temperatures.

Plant Type	Watering Frequency*	Estimated water needs*
Mature evergreens	once a month	Soak the soil to a depth of 6 to 8"
Established cool-season lawns, like tall fescue	once every two weeks	1" every two weeks
Young shrubs and trees	once every two weeks	Check soil moisture first. Slowly soak 15 gallons.
Fall-established lawn	once a week or less	0.5" per week to a depth of 6"
Mature trees	once a month	Soak to a depth of 12"

*These are estimates, always take precipitation amounts into account