

# Our City Forest

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## Tree Care Tips

### Stake Adjustment

Adjust the staking/support as needed. As your tree establishes in the ground, you want it to naturally blow in the wind to build strength, while still being supported safely.

### Pruning

Pruning your tree correctly can strengthen the structure, increase it's lifespan, and save thousands of dollars in future maintenance.

### Mulch

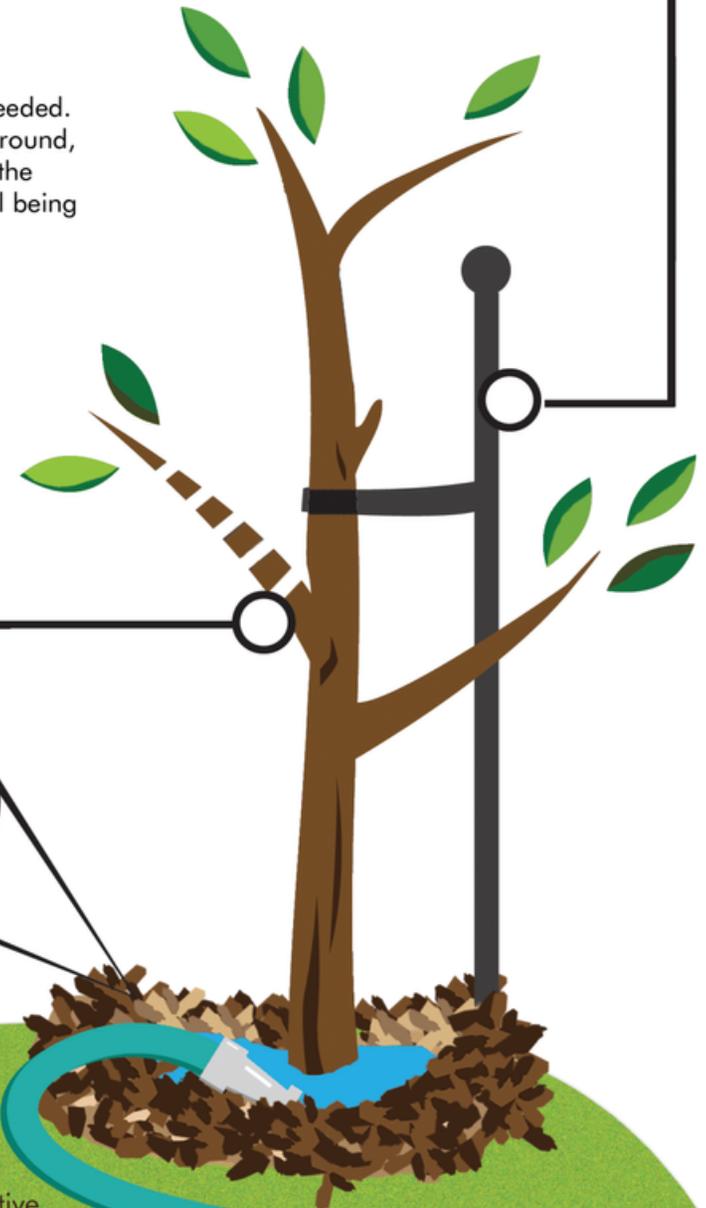
Mulch insulates the soil, retains moisture and keeps out weeds. Apply mulch above the berm, 4-6 inches deep around the tree keeping it 2-4 inches away from the trunk.

### Berm

The berm is a ring-shaped mound of soil around your tree about 18 inches from the trunk that acts as a natural funnel for deep root watering. The berm should be kept free of weeds (but don't use herbicides!)

### Deep Root Watering

Deep root watering is one of the most effective ways to develop healthy roots and prevent surfacing roots.



**Deep Root Watering.** Deep root watering is one of the most effective ways to develop healthy roots and prevent surfacing roots. See the "Our City Forest Guide to Watering Instructions" flyer for more information.

**The Berm.** The berm is a ring-shaped mound of soil around your tree about 18 inches from the trunk that acts as a natural funnel for deep root watering. Keep the watering basin, the area inside the berm, free of grass, weeds, rocks, and other plants. Grass and other plants compete for the tree's water and resources, and makes it more likely that yard equipment will damage the trunk of your tree. Rocks could compact the soil or damage the trunk as it grows. After the tree is established, you can break down the berm.

**Mulch.** Apply mulch 4-6 inches deep around the tree keeping it 2-4 inches away from the trunk. It can be applied directly on top of the berm and should extend outward at least 18 inches. Mulch insulates the soil, retains moisture, prevents soil compaction, keeps out weeds, and reduces lawnmower damage. Remember not to bury the base of the trunk in soil or mulch or it could rot the trunk.

**The Trunk Flare.** Keep the trunk flare clear of debris, mulch, or piled soil. If the trunk is kept moist, it can cause rot, which weakens the wood and can shorten the life of your tree. If soil is piled on top of the roots or against the trunk, circling roots can form which can choke the trunk tissues as they grow, restricting the flow of water and nutrients.

**Pruning.** Pruning your tree the right way can strengthen the structure, increase its lifespan, and save thousands of dollars in future maintenance. Pruning can affect the health and safety of your tree if done incorrectly, and is a technical skill that requires special training. OCF strongly recommends that pruning be done by a certified arborist.

**Wounds and Damage.** Look at the base of the trunk where damage from lawn equipment commonly occurs. Consider using a trunk guard, and alerting those who work on your landscape to the potential damage they could cause. Make sure the metal or wooden stake parts are not rubbing against the trunk or branches.

**Stake Adjustment.** Adjust the staking/support as needed. As your tree establishes in the ground, you want it to naturally blow in the wind to build strength, while still being supported safely. Make sure the support stake is not rubbing against your tree. Soft tubing or rubber straps should be used to secure your tree into place and prevent damage. Never tie wire or rope around your tree. The T-bar on the Reddy Stake can be adjusted simply by loosening the bolt with a wrench. You may also have to remove the stake and re-install it farther from the trunk, or on the opposite side of the lean.

**Stake Removal.** For most young trees the stake should not be on for longer than 3 years if it has received the proper care and stewardship. Leaving the stake on the tree for longer than necessary or staking the tree too tightly can limit the tree's ability to build root and trunk strength and support itself. As the tree outgrows the stake, the stake can actually cause damage to the tree, and becomes increasingly difficult to remove from the ground. To see if your stake is ready to be removed, try the easy "Shake Test." Simply give your tree a firm shake on the trunk. Watch for any movement in the soil at the roots. If the roots move, the tree is not yet established. If you see no movement, your tree is established and no longer requires the stake.

For more information on how to hire an arborist, pruning, watering, and stake adjustment, please visit [www.ourcityforest.org/tree-care](http://www.ourcityforest.org/tree-care) or email our Tree Care team at [treecare@ourcityforest.org](mailto:treecare@ourcityforest.org)



Do not remove more than 1/3 of the tree's canopy or try to change its shape or size significantly. This can kill the tree, and encourages decay to form in the cut branches and trunk.

Topping trees creates more maintenance in the future, because a tree's natural hormonal response to topping causes many new sprouts to grow. This fast-growing, crowded growth is attached weakly to the tree and is more likely to break. Instead, prune your tree for strong structure and health.



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