



## **BASIC CARE GUIDE**

After planting, you must provide the proper care for your landscape. You cannot ignore your investment! Assuming the soil has been well prepared and the right plants have been chosen to match the site conditions, careful attention to maintenance should be undertaken.

The period immediately following installation is the most critical. Small shrubs, perennials, and, especially, annuals can dry out very quickly. Even if the soil of the planting bed feels moist, you need to be sure that the soil mass, or root ball of the plant itself, is damp. Bedding plants may need to be watered several times a day until roots become established.

It is crucial that the roots and planting bed be kept evenly moist all season long. Evenly moist means damp, but not wet or boggy. If a young shrub, such as a small pine, spruce or rhododendron, is allowed to have its' roots completely dry, for even just a day, it can suffer irreparable damage, which may not show up for several months, or even until the following spring. If soil remains wet all the time it is just as bad as too dry, since this can cause root rot.

After planting, check the soil daily near the root zone of each plant. If the root zone is dry, or becoming dry, you should water until the planting bed is thoroughly moistened. Once plants have roots penetrating the planting soil they are not as likely to dry out so quickly. To sustain good health and growth, fully established plantings should receive the equivalent of 1" to 1½" of rain per week through May, June, July and August.

Plantings must receive proper feeding each year in order to thrive. Annuals need a regular supply of nutrients in the form of liquid feeding or Osmocote applications. Shrubs, trees, and perennials are best fed just as new growth has started, and again in late June and July. Top dressings of manure, compost and/or 10-10-10, or Osmocote benefit plantings enormously. Do not fertilize at the end of the season as you do not want new growth to develop before winter.

As a basic rule, lawns should be fed in early May and again in September. If you find you must water frequently to keep the grass from browning out by mid summer, you may also feed in July. Use 10-6-4 in spring/summer and 10-10-10 in the fall. Slow release fertilizers are excellent.

Check the pH of your planting beds once a year. The simplest, fastest way to do this is with a pH meter. Soil can also be sent to Cooperative Extension Service for testing. A pH reading of 6.4 to 6.6 is perfect for most lawns and plantings, which is slightly acid. Some plants like an alkaline soil and you will need to provide lime to those plantings.

