

# CARE FOR YOUNG TREES



## What's Next?

Often we think nature will just take care of newly-planted trees for us, when in fact trees planted in a residential setting need attention, especially during the first few years.

## During the First Year

During the first year of growth we encourage leaving as many limbs on the tree, along the entire length of the trunk, for as long as possible. Keeping these extra limbs provides the maximum leaf surface to manufacture food. This enables the trunks of young trees to grow stronger more rapidly.

Minimal pruning may be required during the first year; this may include removal of dead or broken branches, a competing leader, any branches touching the ground or any sprouts (also known as "suckers") growing directly out of the base of the trunk. Otherwise, trees are best left un-pruned until after their first year of growth.

## Second and Third Year

During the second and third years of growth, trees require minimal pruning. They still need the maximum amount of leaf surface to produce energy. Over-pruning during the second and third years can stunt growth, so be careful.

Before Pruning



After Pruning



There are specific things to focus on when pruning trees during this growth period. Make sure branches are not touching. Rubbing branches result in open wounds that may lead to disease. Remove only the bottom branches off the ground to roughly knee height. You can also start to thin the canopy a little by taking out a few branches here and there. Your tree will be able to withstand the monsoon winds better. Remember, it is important to prune cautiously. It takes years for a tree to develop strong trunk and branch structure.

You should also be able to remove the tree stakes and wires during this growth period. Grab the trunk of the tree and give it a good shake. If the ground around the base of the tree does not move, you can remove the stakes.

## Beyond the Third Year

Beyond the third year of growth, we recommend consulting a professional arborist to plan a proper pruning schedule. Trees that are maintained properly from an early age increase in value over time. Find a certified arborist in your area by visiting <http://isa-arbor.com/findArborist/verifyArbByLoc.aspx>.

## Watering Young Trees

Proper watering is also important for young trees. Over-watering your young tree can have an adverse affect to the point of causing root rot. Giving your young tree the right amount of water does depend in part on the type of tree. Desert adapted trees need less water than non-native trees; nonetheless, all young trees need to be closely monitored. Check the soil moisture around the base of your young tree with a screwdriver. If it goes into the soil easily, there is enough moisture. If it is difficult to push the screwdriver into the soil, you may need to increase the duration or frequency of watering.

The Arizona Cooperative Extension website, <http://ag.arizona.edu/maricopa/garden/>, has useful information about managing your trees. Also visit <http://wateruseitwisely.com/> for watering guidelines.

