

Help Desk FAQs

Summer 2022

Question 1 - How Do I Keep My Trees Healthy in Drought Conditions

My family moved to Woodland in August from the water-abundant South-East where we lived for decades. California's physical environment, climate, and tree and plant care are completely new to us. We want to preserve the many fruit trees (Asian pear, fig, lemon, apple, lime, and pomegranate) currently in our yard and are eager to get started doing the right thing for them. Please advise on what we need to do, and can you also direct us to a certified arborist?

Answer 1

You are on the right track in putting the health of your trees first during heat and drought conditions. Trees help cool our yards and homes and take years to replace, so preserving them is crucial. Be sure to keep trees adequately watered in the heat. Mature trees such as yours need less frequent water than newly planted trees. Most mature trees should be deeply watered every 2- 4 weeks, depending on the type of tree, with landscape trees on the less frequent end of the range. Water at the "drip line" (the outer edge of the tree canopy also) in the coolest part of the day for long enough that the soil is wet down to 18 inches. This is important because of the much larger and deeper root structure of a tree as compared to shrubs or lawns. One way to do this is with scheduled drip irrigation, or soaker hoses turned on low and left for several hours. Setting an alarm to remind you to turn off the hose or hoses can be helpful! We are attaching a link with more information on the care of trees during a drought.¹

In terms of other tree care, postpone any fertilizing or pruning until the end of summer or later, depending on the tree. Fertilization will cause new growth, which will be susceptible to damage in the summer heat. Pruning will also make the tree susceptible to heat damage. Fig and citrus trees require very little pruning other than shaping and the removal of suckers. We recommend The California Backyard Orchard website for detailed information on the care of fruit trees, including information on how and when to prune.²

As Master Gardeners, we are not able to recommend specific arborists or tree services, but we do recommend using certified arborists, when necessary. The Sacramento Tree foundation link will help you find an arborist, if necessary.³

1. <https://ccmg.ucanr.edu/files/219422.pdf>
2. <https://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/>
3. <https://sactree.org/tree-care-tips/tips-for-hiring-an-arborist/>