

NEWS RELEASE  
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## SUMMER TREE IRRIGATION

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE  
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After our recent heat wave in Mariposa County, many callers have requested information on proper tree irrigation practices. Some incorrect conventional wisdom is that oaks and even native pines should never be watered in the summer. Since we rarely receive rain from May to September, the idea has developed that these trees do not need summer irrigation. Generally, that is correct. However, during periods of drought, as we are now experiencing, many native trees will become water stressed, more susceptible to bark beetles, and may even die. This is part of the natural cycle. If you have select trees that you wish to keep healthy, such as near your home, during dry periods they can be helped by infrequent, deep irrigation. This is even true for native oaks, provided the water is applied well away from the trunk area.

Our research, conducted during a severe drought, showed that deep, thorough summer irrigation of native oaks, out at the dripline (ends of branches), actually helps keep them alive. Many of the unwatered oaks in our trials died.

Our recommendation is to water slowly, for several hours, near the dripline once or twice a month during dry, hot periods. A drip or soaker hose system works well. It needs to be emphasized that the trunk crown area of most trees should always be kept dry to prevent crown-rotting diseases from developing. Never put other plants around the base of trees, especially oaks. Most smaller landscape plants will need more frequent watering, which is not what mature trees tolerate.

If you have already planted near native oaks, remove these plants. Then, expose the trunk area by removing a few inches of soil to allow it to dry. Then keep it dry. One hundred years from now, you can show your great-grandchildren the tree you saved!



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