



## How to Maintain Planting Beds

Planting beds can improve the curb appeal of your home especially when they are well-maintained. To keep your garden beds in tip-top shape, follow the tips below.

### 1. Prune Dead and Damaged Flowers (deadheading)

If you notice damaged, dying, or dead flowers, remove them to encourage continued blooming and to prevent plants from going to seed (i.e., using energy to making seed instead of growing). Shrubs should also be pruned and trimmed as needed and to maintain natural shape. Keep in mind that each perennial is different and should be pruned in either Spring or Fall.

*Recommendation: Be sure that your garden shears are sharp and clean. That way, you can make good cuts that heal properly.*

### 2. Remove Weeds and Other Garden Debris

Weeds are essentially unwanted plants. Some of them can be very invasive so it's important to regularly pull them.

In addition, removing fallen leaves and dead branches should be standard activities on your maintenance checklist. Keep groundcovers trimmed so that they don't overgrow and crowd out other plants.

*Recommendations:*

- Pull weeds from your planting beds monthly. Or, contact our office to put down a pre-emergent herbicide and mulch to help limit weeds in your planting beds.
- If you decide to apply pre-emergent yourself, you must activate it by applying water to the treated areas.

### 3. Look Out for Insects and Disease

Insect infestation can ruin the look of your garden beds and spread viruses from one plant to another. An easy way to fend off insects is to keep plants well cared for. Healthy and unstressed plants tend to hold up better than unhealthy ones.

Keep in mind: While disease-resistant plants can get infected, they tend to fight off attacks instead falling prey to viruses. Some amount of damage from insects is to be expected and is not necessarily an indication of a plant in poor condition.



## Watering Guide for Plants

### Recommendations:

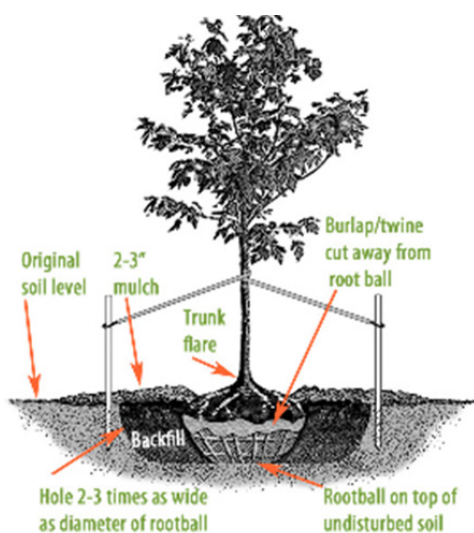
- Use an environmentally-friendly spray to deter insects.
- Plant the right plant in the right location so they can thrive. Sun plants prefer southern exposure and shade plants like shady areas.
- Use natural insect control like ladybugs and praying mantis to ward off aphids and other insects. You can purchase them or simply grow a variety of plants that will naturally attract them to your garden. Chickens can also help to keep insect populations in your vegetable gardens under control.
- Call our office to install disease-resistant plants and shrubs.

### 4. Use Proper Watering Techniques

Watering your plants regularly will help them thrive. Too much water, however, can waterlog them and lead to disease and root rot. Try to avoid wetting the plant's foliage since this may allow disease to take hold.

### Recommendations:

- Water during early morning hours (or set the timer on your irrigation system) so that the roots can absorb water before the sun rises.
- Use a soaker hose or drip irrigation system.
- When using a watering can or garden hose, gently move the leaves aside to apply water the roots of the plants.
- Mulch retains water so be sure to water the surrounding mulch to ensure that plants have access to water throughout the day.



Don't apply too much mulch! 2-3\"/>

### 5. Apply Mulch

Mulch is an organic material that erodes over time. This is good for your planting beds because as the mulch decomposes, it adds nutrients back to the soil. Here are some additional benefits of applying mulch:

- Helps retain moisture
- Keeps soil cooler during warmer temperatures
- Limits the growth of weeds
- Protects roots during colder temperatures
- Creates a neat, uniform look to planting beds and helps flowers and shrubs stand out



## Watering Guide for Plants

Keep in mind: Applying too much mulch (4-6" deep) can create a welcoming environment for insects and bacteria.

*Recommendations:*

- *The maximum you should apply is typically 2-3".*
- *Mulch should not be near the trunk of your trees.*

### **6. Add Fertilizer**

Some plants may not get all the nutrients that need from the air and soil (carbon, hydrogen and oxygen), so adding fertilizers containing nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (N-P-K) can help them flourish. Use a fertilizer with the proper N-P-K ratio and be careful not to damage or destroy your plants by over fertilizing.

Keep in mind: Some plants do get the required nutrients from the soil. Once those nutrients are used up, you will need to replace those nutrients so your plants can have continued healthy growth. Using fertilizers is a great way to do that.

*Recommendations:*

- *Test the pH of your soil (ideal pH is 6 or 7).*
- *Research the Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K) or N-P-K ratio your plants need. The N-P-K ratio will depend on the type of plant (e.g., annuals, perennials, shrubs) and what they require to flourish.*
- *Use a slow-release granular fertilizer in late Fall so that it can slowly release through the winter months (follow package instructions).*