



Columbia Nursery

Fall Watering Guide for Northwest Montana (Zones 3-5)

Fall watering is an important step in preparing your trees, shrubs, and lawn for winter. Providing the right amount of water ensures healthy plants that can survive harsh winters and thrive in spring.

Why Fall Watering Matters:

- Prevents plant dehydration during winter.
- Helps trees and shrubs store water in roots, stems, and crowns.
- Reduces the risk of winter damage, especially in evergreens.

When to Water:

- Late Summer (August): Begin to reduce watering frequency. This signals plants to stop producing soft new growth and start hardening off for winter.
- After Leaf Drop (October-November): Once leaves have fallen and plants are dormant, begin deep watering. Continue until the ground freezes.

How Much to Water:

- Provide about 1 inch of water per week to trees and shrubs after leaf drop.
- Continue weekly watering until the soil is frozen.

Special Considerations:

- Evergreens lose water through needles all winter and need deep watering in fall.
- Fruit Trees benefit from fall watering to help set buds and store moisture for spring fruiting.
- Lawns can be watered until freezing, but don't let grass grow too long before snowfall to prevent disease.

Fertilizing in Fall:

- Apply quick-release granular fertilizer (like 16-16-16) after leaf drop.
- Avoid slow-release fertilizers in fall, as they won't activate before winter.

Tips for Success:

- Use a moisture meter or check soil manually—water when soil is dry more than 1 inch below the surface.
- Water deeply but less frequently.
- Avoid overwatering late in the season as it can cause winter damage.

Need Help?

Visit Columbia Nursery for watering tools, fertilizers, and expert guidance on fall and winter plant care in Northwest Montana!