

WATERING

I have stated ad-nauseum that sufficient water should be added to the planting medium of a potted plant/tree to maintain a just moist consistency. Neither too wet nor too dry. This is not the full picture of watering requirements.

Water is needed for the metabolism of a plant to continue to work. Water pressure in the plant system is necessary for it to hold its leaves and twigs up without drooping. It always moves toward the highest concentration of salt so if the planting medium contains more salt than the top of the plant, water will be drawn downwards instead of up and the plant will probably expire.

Photosynthesis in the leaves converts carbon dioxide and water into sugar and oxygen.

Water then, is again necessary for that procedure to take place.

As the weather becomes warmer, the leaves transpire (their equivalent of sweating) to keep the plant cool, making a larger amount of water necessary and this has to be taken into account.

Ideally the water should contain little or no salt and have a pH value of something between 6 and 7.5.

Hard water has a high carbonate and/or salt content, some of which can be reduced by drawing the mains water and allowing it to stand for a time, when some of these, particularly chlorine, will be released into the atmosphere. The standing water will also assume the same temperature as the air and will benefit from being close to the plants/trees for which it is intended.

Pond and well water can often have concentrations of salt in it and should only be used if tested and found suitable.

Rain-water appears to be the best for our purpose if it is collected and stored out of contact with contaminants. It is usually almost salt and calcium free and very slightly acidic. It is nearly mandatory for Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Camellias and Gardenias.

If you grow Hornbeam, Hazel, Hawthorn, Beech, Spruce, Yew or Cherry be particularly careful about avoiding salt.

A modicum of lime is welcomed by Euonymus, Sabina juniper, Apple and pear, Blackthorn, Oak, Mountain ash Beech and Yew.

Watering through a fine rose gives a more natural application and is less likely to wash medium out of the pot or cause puddling. Leaves may also be wet in this way but not if watering last thing before nightfall when less evaporation takes place. Moisture remaining on the leaves overnight or for a long time can result in fungus growth.

Only if the root ball has dried out completely, is it sometimes necessary to dunk the pot completely in water until all bubbles cease to rise. Peat based mixes are sometimes difficult to re-wet and may need this and even a spot of detergent added for particularly moisture resistant mixes. After being allowed to drain, subsequent watering is best continued from above in the normal way. The passage of moisture from top to bottom of the medium draws air in behind it. Air being necessary for the health of the roots too.