

For a demonstration of these techniques watch [our video on Proper Planting!](#)

[www.rockledgegardens.com/videotutorials](http://www.rockledgegardens.com/videotutorials)

New plants should go in the ground as soon as possible. If planting must be delayed, water the pots thoroughly.

**\*\*Depending on the weather, you may need to water daily.** Keep an eye on them and don't let the roots dry out!

## Steps for Successful Planting

1) *Dig your hole.* The hole should be wider but no deeper than the plant's root ball. Once planted, the soil at the top of the pot should be level with the ground. The bottom of the hole should be flat so there are no air pockets between the ground and your new plant (**tip:** use the bottom of the original pot to flatten; see video for demo of this technique).

2) *Remove the plant from the nursery pot and check the roots!* When removing your new plant from its container, give the roots a quick check. If they encircle more than one-third of the root ball, cut them back or make vertical slits in the root ball.

3) *Plant and backfill.* Add **Espoma Bio-Tone Starter Plus** to the hole and carefully place your plant into the hole on top of it (Bio-Tone should come in direct contact with roots). Backfill with a 50-50 mixture of the soil from the hole and our **Rockledge Gardens Planting Mix** (for plants you are putting into pots, use one of our **Foxfarm** potting soils). These two organic products will greatly improve the drainage and quality of the soil around your new plant and stimulate root growth and nutrient absorption for quicker establishment. Work the Bio-Tone into the soil alongside the root ball while planting.

4) *Create a berm.* For trees, form a ridge of soil (berm) 2 - 3 inches high around the edge of the new plant to serve as a reservoir when watering. This berm should have a diameter a little wider than the original pot. If using a hose with watering wand attachment, you can skip this step (see watering notes).

5) *Water in.* The initial watering-in should completely soak the root ball and fill the berm you created in step 4. In addition to your irrigation, new plants need to be watered **by hand** in order to get established (see additional watering notes in next column).

## Watering

85% of new plants that fail do so because of improper watering! Water should be applied for the first 4 - 8 weeks by hand to ensure deep absorption into the soil. Use a hose to water around your tree or plant to completely soak the root ball. Mark your time for thorough watering (see chart below).

Pot Size	Watering Time
30-gallon	60 seconds
15-gallon	40 seconds
7-gallon	25 seconds
3-gallon	15 seconds
1-gallon	6 seconds

## New plants should be watered on a distinct schedule.

Only on rainy days should you skip watering (see chart below).

Week	Watering Frequency
1-2	Daily
3-4	Every other day
5-6	Twice weekly
6 and beyond	Let sprinkler/rain take over

Exceptions include planting in cool weather, areas with poor drainage, and certain plants that don't require daily watering (i.e. palms, xeriscape plants, succulents). *Ask us or check Rockledge Gardens' handouts for specific watering instructions by plant type.* We are reachable for questions at **321-636-7662** or email [info@rockledgegardens.com](mailto:info@rockledgegardens.com)

## Fertilizing

Along with proper watering, regular, measured feedings are the surest way to establish and maintain healthy, vigorous plants. **We recommend using the Espoma line of organic fertilizers.** A cup or two can be added at planting time. **If using synthetic fertilizers, wait at least a month after planting and measure according to bag instructions.** For non-organics, fertilizing is not a guessing game! Too much can burn and even kill your plant, too little is a waste of time and money. Always follow product directions for amounts to use. When in doubt, ask us!

**Note:** Synthetic fertilizers are much quicker acting than organics but organic fertilizer improves the overall health and vitality of the soil, while synthetics do not.

# New Plants (once established)

The following watering guidelines are a resource to assist in setting irrigation timers and manual sprinklers beginning at 6 weeks after your new plants have been planted in the ground.

The amount of water a plant receives after the initial first two months is still very important. Most plants that fail in the first six months after planting do so because of a watering problem — either too much or too little.

Most plants (including trees, shrubs and lawn grass) do best here when they are watered twice a week in warm weather and less often when it is cooler. **Watering established plants more than twice a week is dangerous to plant health**, and often results in a variety of fungal diseases.

Be sure to ask us if you are not sure of a plant’s water needs. We are always glad to help you choose the right plant for the right spot.

For most plants including your lawn grass, we recommend the watering schedule seen on the table below. **Please note that there is a difference in watering times between mainland Brevard and the barrier islands.** The islands typically have sandier soil than mainland Brevard and require a little more water.  
**How Much to Water Established Plants**

Temp	Weekly frequency	Mainland Brevard	Barrier Islands
90°F+	Twice	45min	60min
80°F to 89°	Twice	30min	40min
70°F to 79°	Twice	15min	20min
70°F or lower, below 60°F at night	Every other week	15min	20min

While this watering schedule will work well for most people, adjustments should be made for the following reasons:

- 1) Water less or not at all when it rains, depending on the frequency and amount of rainfall.
- 2) Water more during periods of exceptional drought or if your soil is exceptionally sandy. **When watering more, increase the number of minutes that your irrigation runs but not the weekly frequency.**
- 3) Consider your irrigation system: some newer irrigation systems have a higher water output. Scale your number of minutes downward if this is the case.
- 4) Make adjustments for mulch. Because mulch holds moisture, it may be possible to decrease the number of minutes you water accordingly.
- 5) Water less if you have a drainage problem or if you have soil that retains water longer than the average.

For practical care purposes, any plant is considered “established” when it begins to exhibit new growth. A shrub is considered “fully established” after 9 - 12 months with certain trees taking up to three years.

We are here for you if you need further help. Always feel free to reach out!

