**Trees : when and how to water.**

We have just had the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and there have been many trees planted. Also we have just had the Covid Pandemic and there have also been many memorial trees planted.  It is especially important as we are having and will continue to have a hot summer that trees and shrubs planted for theses events are properly cared for in order to create the desired legacy.

I thought it was therefore a good idea to send out a reminder about the watering of new plantings.

Most bare root trees (exactly as it sounds delivered with no pot just roots) and shrubs are planted in the autumn/winter. The roots should never be allowed to dry out before planting.  On planting they should be well watered in . Care should be taken to not plant into waterlogged soil. This is especially important with our clay soils as the clay can act as a bowl that captures the water and drowns the roots. On sandy soil this is not an issue but most soils are something in between. A newly planted bare root tree will need further watering when the buds burst in the spring until the leaves have fallen in the autumn or leaf fall generally if the tree is evergreen. Ideally, this should continue for the first two summers and should equate to a generous bucket of water every other day or so. It’s a mammoth task if you’ve planted a wood.

Pot grown trees and shrubs can be planted at anytime of year but generally it’s not a good idea to undertake any new planting during a dry spell. Notwithstanding the difficulty of digging the hole it is best to wait for overcast and damp conditions. Pot grown trees and shrubs planted other than in the autumn/winter

require more frequent watering. For the first couple of weeks after planting they should be watered daily, from week 3-12 water every two/three days and after 12 weeks water weekly. Ideally this should continue for the first two summers.

Common sense should dictate whether these watering schedules are too much or not enough. Push your finger into the soil around the tree to gauge how wet is for although the top might be wet further down may feel too dry. Remember that it’s the roots  that need water and so even if it’s been raining the area of the root ball may have been shielded by the tree canopy and need  watering separately. Many trees are planted with tubes reaching to the roots for ease of watering . This can be a good idea but as they peek above the ground can also allow insect and animal access to the roots which may be problematic . However, with many trees it may be the only way to undertake watering.  Automatic watering systems are great but expensive and need vigilance to ensure they are working properly and monitor the amount of water they are dispensing to the tree. Nothing beats the close attention of a human caring for the tree as who else would notice if the water doesn’t not drain away making the soil waterlogged or alternatively is too dry.

 Sadly many of the recently planted trees and shrubs do not have such a human . So, if you see a new planting (or any planting for that matter) wilting, scorched leaved or sitting in bone dry or water logged ground -try and do something about it.  Even when the utmost care is taken to water well some trees do not survive. This is normal. Tree failure has many faces.