



For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Mary Lynne Beckley
Georgia Urban Forest Council
404-377-0404 (o)
gufc@gufc.org

Cheryl Kortemeier
Trees Atlanta
404-681-4895 (o)
Cheryl@treesatlanta.org

Donna Rayfield
Georgia Arborist Association
770-554-3735 (o)
gaa@georgiaarborist.net

Georgia's Trees Need Extra Attention in Order to Thrive Post-Drought Proper Irrigation, Mulching, Pruning, Soil Nutrient and Pest Management are Keys to Success

Atlanta, Georgia – June 19, 2009 – The Georgia Environmental Protection Division recently declared an end to the drought affecting forty percent of our region since 2007. Rainfall levels this spring are at the highest in 115 years. While Georgia's lakes, rivers and streams are recharged and returning to normal levels, trees and shrubs may take months or years to recover from the drought.

Trees and most plants require water for many primary functions of their existence – photosynthesis, cell expansion, nutrient uptake, chemical reactions, etc – and suffer when water is limited. Even when water becomes available to trees, it is possible that significant signs of the previous years' stress will continue to appear. Trees have been forced to use precious carbohydrate reserves to stay alive during the dry summers when sugars couldn't be produced through photosynthesis. Doing so year after year places trees in a weakened, compromised state. Trees have less ability to defend themselves against insects and diseases when they are fragile. They may also become structurally unstable and hazardous as heavy rains and accompanying winds pass through our region.

“With the drought officially over, people may be inclined to lower the priority they place on the care of their trees and shrubs. However, many plants will continue to feel the effects of the drought and homeowner need to maintain their awareness to the same level as before, keeping a lookout for signs of disease, infestation or other decline, said Stephen Johnston, Vice President and Division Manager of Bartlett Tree Experts. “Regular preventative care by a certified arborist will keep trees healthy and better prepared to survive the next drought.”

Trees that have been weakened or invaded by pests may not immediately show symptoms of stress because of the vast amount of energy that is stored within the tree. Trees are extremely large organisms that are remarkably resilient, but multiple years of drought stress will manifest for many years to come.

“It is important that home and business owners care for trees of all ages in a consistent manner to ensure their longevity,” said Trees Atlanta Executive Director, Marcia Bansley. She recommends having your trees evaluated regularly by a certified arborist. “Trees increase our property value by \$2,000 on average, so including them in your home improvement budget makes good economic sense,” she concluded.

It is also important to monitor the health of your trees and provide them with the best possible growing conditions to recover post-drought. The best way to do this is through proper irrigation, mulching, soil nutrient management, pruning, and pest management. Trees require, on average, ten gallons of water per caliper inch (trunk diameter) per week to establish and approximately one inch of water per week

during growing seasons thereafter. Mulch consists of natural materials like hardwood chips, pine straw or other organic matter. It should be applied 2-3 inches thick around the roots of the tree out to the tips of the branches. Mulch should not be applied within three inches of the tree trunk. Soil nutrient management is not a one size fits all process. Your local County Extension Service can analyze your soil and identify which nutrients are missing. Once identified, appropriate slow-release fertilizer may be applied around your tree when rainfall is adequate. Commercially available soil amendments that introduce beneficial fungi and help retain moisture are also available. Pruning is the removal of dead or dying limbs that may harbor insects or disease. Proper technique is key, so that trimming your tree does not do more harm than good. Finally, watching your tree for any insect or disease infestation and addressing this attack is essential for optimum tree health.

Trees in the urban forest help us manage rainfall no matter what the conditions. They maximize use of rainfall during drought and reduce water flow into our waterways and municipal storm water systems during downpours. Come drought or high water, Georgia's trees are worth protecting. Contact the Georgia Urban Forest Council, Georgia Arborist Association and Trees Atlanta to learn more about how you can help protect and improve Georgia's treasure—its trees.

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The Georgia Urban Forest Council works to sustain Georgia's green legacy by helping communities grow healthy trees. For more information about GUF, visit www.gufc.org.

Trees Atlanta is a nationally recognized citizens group that protects and improves Atlanta's urban forest by planting, conserving and educating. For more information about the Trees Atlanta, visit www.treesatlanta.org.

The Georgia Arborist Association brings together tree care professionals and enthusiasts for the betterment and protection of Georgia's trees. For more information about GAA, visit www.georgiaarborist.net.