

## CEMETERY TREE MAINTENANCE

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One of the major assets of a cemetery is beautiful trees. This is because people find serenity with trees. I know a number of people who like to walk in cemeteries--not to visit graves or to read interesting headstones but to enjoy the peace and quiet...and the beauty of the trees. On a recent trip to England, I walked through a couple of old cemeteries just to enjoy the beauty of the stately yew trees, that must have been a couple of hundred years old. And if people enjoy and want trees in cemeteries, they are willing to pay a premium for a "location" that has beautiful, well-maintained trees. Thus, it is the responsibility of cemetery superintendents to satisfy this need by planting and maintaining a great variety of beautiful trees in their cemeteries.

Trees do not necessarily require high maintenance. By selecting the right species for the site and by investing a few dollars in proper culture in the early years of the tree's life, considerable costs in maintenance can be saved in later years.

Young trees should be pruned to develop good structure. Where possible, develop a good central leader and remove branches that will develop weak V-shaped crotches, that have a tendency to break in storms. Also remove branches that have a tendency to grow inward instead of outward. Check the trees a few years after planting and determine if certain lower limbs will cause "problems" in the years ahead and if so remove them before they become problems. By doing so early, the problem is avoided and the cut will heal faster. Thus, in the long run a more attractive tree is produced at less cost. Where large branches must be cut, do so by the three cut system. First make an under cut to avoid stripping the bark when the heavy branch falls to the ground as the second cut is made to remove the branch. Then by a third cut remove the stub flush with the trunk.

In cemeteries doing a good job of turf care, little or no fertilizer will be needed for trees as the chances are fairly good that enough nitrogen will leach into the root zone to meet the needs of the trees. However, in a few cemeteries there could be some trouble with lack of iron (See "Are Your Trees Starving to Death?")

Trees need water if they are going to grow and develop into beautiful specimens. This is especially true for newly planted trees. Be sure that you make plans for watering newly planted trees every 5 to 7 days unless there has been a good rain. A little extra nitrogen at this time could help speed up the growth and establishment of the young trees.

A three inch mulch of wood chips about the base of newly planted trees will help reduce the loss of moisture by evaporation. Also it will reduce "lawn mower" injury at the base of these trees. Herbicides, such as Treflan, Casoron and Princep incorporated into the mulch will help reduce weed growth.

A word of caution with the use of herbicides in cemeteries. Avoid the use of industrial weed killers in areas underlain with the roots of valuable trees as many of the materials are soluble and will leach into the root zone. They are then absorbed

by the roots and translocated to the crown where they produce various phytotoxic results. Be sure to read the label and apply according to directions.

Cemetery trees are a valuable asset. Let's keep them healthy and vigorous and they will provide beauty and serenity for thousands of people--and one of them may be you.