

# ask SAM

*Dear Sam,*

*I'm new to Wyoming and where I am from, I never had to worry much about watering my landscape. I learned a lot from my friends and neighbors this summer, but now I hear them talking about watering in the winter and I'm not sure I understand.*

*Sincerely,  
New to Wyoming*

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## **Dear New to Wyoming,**

While it may sound counterintuitive, your neighbors are correct: In order to thrive in the arid West, your trees will need supplemental water in both the summer and winter months.

In much of the state, we regularly experience some colder fall temperatures and then a warm-up that often lasts into late November. When this occurs, the trees that still have leaves (especially the evergreens, which photosynthesize every day of the year) use water and give off water. These processes deplete the water supply in the soil.

Watering in the winter helps replenish water lost to photosynthesis, transpiration, and wind desiccation (when wind strips the moisture from a tree's leaves). I recommend watering any day that the wind isn't blowing and the temperatures are above 40 degrees Fahrenheit—and joke that that equates to about once a month. However, if the ground and plants are covered by drifting snow, you can skip winter watering.

Whether you're watering in the summer or winter, focus on the area surrounding the tree, not just the base of the trunk. As you may know from standing under a tree in a rainstorm, trees shed water along an imaginary line that follows the edge of the outermost branches. Watering efforts should be focused on this line, also called the drip line.

Putting a sprinkler on your garden hose and watering the area surrounding a tree mimics rainfall, spreading the water supply over the entire root system. Trees evolved by gathering rainfall and if you can replicate that process, the roots will draw water from the soil and supply the entire plant, no matter the size.

For more information on proper winter watering practices, visit <https://bit.ly/winter-water>.

—Sam



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