



CHRISTENSEN'S PLANT CENTER

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Watering plants on the jobsite

Prior to joining the Christensen's team, my experience in the green industry included several years of serving as a project foreman. With the pressure of timelines and the multitude of aspects of a job that require focus, it can be easy to overlook the need to water nursery stock on the job site. Just because most bids do not contain a line item for on-site plant material management, does not mean that it can be overlooked as part of project planning. Proper irrigation and care of plant material should be considered preventative maintenance. A small investment now can prevent a larger cost and hassle later. Implementation of a job site watering regimen will greatly increase the quality of the final product and decrease the likelihood of the demise of plant material.



As a contractor, you can only control the handling and care of plant material during the installation process. First, a suitable staging area for the plants should be decided upon before material is delivered to the job site.

Ideally, this location should be shaded, near a water source, and should not impede production. Choose a location for B&B material where the plants can be heeled in if necessary. Second, upon delivery plan on watering all plant material as it is unloaded.

Because plant material experiences desiccation during delivery and you cannot be certain of the last time the plant was irrigated at the nursery, watering at this point is critical. It is very difficult and time consuming to try to rehydrate a dried out root ball. Thus said, the third consideration of the regimen is how often or when to water. Nursery stock should be irrigated a minimum of two times daily. Care of plant material should fill any idle time on the job site. To ensure adequate watering of plant material by workers, never schedule the task as a prerequisite to a break or the end of the work day.



The second part of this discussion is technique. For the most part, plants uptake water and nutrients through their root system. The application of water to the foliage of plants does very little to supply the proper hydration. For B&B material, set the unobstructed end of a hose at the base of the plant and run at a medium flow, ensuring that



Ben Woloskie

Christensen's Plant Center
6282 Gotfredson Road
Plymouth, Michigan 48170
(734) 454-1400 voice
(734) 454-1414 fax

[***Return to Archive***](#)



the soil does not flush away. For container material, fill the pot with water and allow to drain through. Repeat this process a minimum of two to three times per irrigation cycle. Taking the time to instruct the crew on proper watering technique is essential.

Protect your profit through implementing an on-site plant material maintenance program. Proper, continuous irrigation of nursery stock will greatly increase the vitality of the plant material and reduce the number of warranty replacements. Once the job is complete, follow up by providing clear watering instructions to your client and check coverage of the irrigation, if present. A little extra effort during the installation process will pay dividends in the long run.