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NEWS

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Winter Care Critical for Younger Trees

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. – Autumn arrived in fits and starts this year, leaving many trees still stubbornly clinging to their leaves even now in mid-November. Yet with winter almost here, younger trees and shrubs on the Western Slope can still greatly benefit from a regimen of care to remain healthy during the coming months.

Community Forester Vince Urbina of the Colorado State Forest Service offers the following tips to prepare younger urban trees for winter:

- **Wrap the trunk.** In Colorado, thin-barked trees like honeylocust, crabapple, maple and linden are especially susceptible to sunscald and frost cracks over winter. Guard the trunks of any smaller trees up to the first branches using thin, light-colored plastic tubing or commercial crepe paper tree wrap. Be sure to remove any wrap by early April to prevent the buildup of excess moisture in the spring.
- **Mulch the base.** Apply 2-4 inches of wood, bark or other organic mulch near the base of each tree, but not against it, to reduce soil evaporation, improve water absorption and insulate against extreme temperatures.
- **Hold off on pruning.** Autumn sometimes is considered a good time to prune, but pruning can stimulate trees to remain active. Instead, Urbina recommends pruning in very early spring when trees have not yet leafed, and branch structure and problems are still visible.
- **Water over winter.** Water all trees and shrubs about once a month over winter to combat the effects of Colorado's arid climate. The best time for winter watering is on warmer days, when snow has melted off and it's above 40 degrees.

"It's necessary to water newly planted trees during the winter months, because their smaller roots are especially susceptible to drying out," Urbina said. "Watering will give them a head start for next year's growing season."

For more information about urban tree care in Western Colorado, visit the Colorado State Forest Service website at csfs.colostate.edu or call Vince Urbina at 970-248-7326.

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