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'CONSTANT' IRRIGATION KEY TO FRUIT TREE SURVIVAL THESE DAYS

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Waller County Master Gardeners

It is over hundred degrees; it has not rained in over 6 weeks and the breeze picks up in the afternoons to dry whatever moisture is left in the soil. What do you do?

We cannot command nature to do our bidding, but we can alleviate the struggle fruit trees and plants are facing until the weather cools off or are blessed with rain.

Consistent irrigation is key! The best way to achieve that is to water early in the morning when the first 6 inches of soil feels dry to the touch. If you find it hard to judge moisture needs, use a moisture meter, inserted 6 inches deep in the soil. Water your fruit trees once a week and early in the morning to allow enough time for the roots to absorb the water before the heat sets in and the water evaporates.

When you irrigate, soak the area around the tree thoroughly, at least 12 inches deep and ensure you water around the drip line. Remember tree trunks are like your skeleton, they only hold the tree. Focus your irrigation on the root system that spreads about three times the limb area. Keep in mind that young trees may need frequent irrigation. However, the best way to ensure your fruits trees are sufficiently irrigated is to install drip irrigation with a timer.

Since the last freeze, many home gardeners are opting to keep their citrus in pots, giving them the option of moving the pots to protected areas during hard freezes. Citrus

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however, are considered subtropical, meaning they also need adequate amount of irrigation. The problem with pots is that they dry quickly and if planted in black plastic, the root system may get stressed.

To give your potted citrus the best chance of survival is to place them on the east facing side of the house or any structure that will provide afternoon shade. They will also require daily irrigation, unless you have them set up on a timer. Also, aside from your periodic fertilization, your potted citrus will benefit from a once-a-week soil drench of fish emulsion and liquid molasses. They are guaranteed to help the plant deal with heat stress.

Until nature decides enough is enough, keep your fruit trees adequately irrigated. The good news, nothing lasts forever, not even the heat!

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