

# TREES AND TURF

## Selection:

When trees and turf are used in the same areas, extra attention must be given to plant material selection in addition to the usual hardiness, climate and soil needs. An effort should be made to make the **trees and lawn compatible**. Grass is generally a sun loving plant. Most grass species will not grow well in areas that get less than 50 percent open sunlight; however, new varieties with improved shade tolerance are being introduced.

In areas where the lawn is the primary design feature, select woody plants that do the least damage to **grass growth and maintenance**. The woody plants should be small, have an open canopy (trees that allow sunlight to penetrate to the ground) or have a high canopy. Select trees that do not root near the soil surface; surface rooting is most serious where shallow topsoil is present. Remember that tree roots get larger as the tree gets older.

## Competition:

Trees, shrubs, ground covers, and lawn grasses all require **sunlight, water and rooting space for growth**. Each plant in the landscape competes with the neighbouring plant regardless of type or species.

While shade may be the greatest negative, tree-related influence on turf growth, tree roots also create problems. Contrary to general thinking, most tree roots are in the top three feet of soil. More importantly, the majority of fine, absorbing roots are in the top six inches of soil. While grass roots ordinarily occupy a much greater percentage of the soil volume than the tree roots and out-compete them for water and nutrients, especially around young trees, grass root density is often much lower in areas where trees were established first. In these situations, **tree roots compete much better for water and nutrients** and prevent or reduce the success of establishing new turf.

## Maintenance Practices:

**Watering** of lawns is beneficial to trees if the watering is done correctly. Trees need the equivalent of one inch of rain every seven to ten days. Applying frequent, shallow watering does not properly the needs of either trees or turf and can be harmful to both.

Turf growing under or near trees should be mowed at the top of its recommended mowing height. Mowing off no more than one-third of the grass blade's height and letting the clippings remain on the lawn will do much to ensure a **healthy and vigorous lawn**.

**WATERING TIPS** - Use an oscillating sprinkler or any type of sprinkler that gives a square coverage pattern. This avoids overlaps, which cause the lawn to have a blotchy appearance. During the hot months of July and August water **heavily** once or twice a week. This means leaving the sprinkler for several hours in one spot. This promotes deep root growth and minimizes the tendency for grasses to go dormant in extreme heat. It is best to water early in the morning, as this gives the surface a chance to dry.