

When Do Trees Grow?

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Oregon Tree Farmer of the Year

2006 National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year

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"Are your trees growing?" is a question I hear any time of year in many places. Most people have no idea that trees grow only a few months a year and not all year around.

The time of height growth of Northwest conifers varies with the species but begins sometime in April or May at low elevations and continues until about August. At higher elevations the growing season is shorter. Underground root growth activity of a tree is very important to the life of the tree. The actual time varies with soil temperatures but there are two root growth periods in the Northwest. The first one begins around February or March peaking probably in May and tapering off in the hot, dry summer weather. Another shorter root growth occurs in October and November. . As a tree grows taller it needs to have a bigger, stronger support for the added foliage and more capacity to carry water and nutrients up and down. In the Northwest, trees make a pair of growth rings each year. The lighter colored, more porous ring is called spring wood and the dark less porous ring is called summer wood. The age of a tree can easily be determined by counting these rings. This is not true in a tropical area where trees grow all year around.

Growth rates of trees are variable. Growth of a tree can be retarded if it has insufficient nutrition or water. Temperature and light may also have a significant impact upon the rate of tree growth. Within a certain range, a temperature increase of 18° can nearly double the growth rate.

Likewise, human growth can be retarded by adverse conditions. Physical and mental activity can foster good mental and physical health. Spiritual growth, so essential for God's best for us, comes only from exposure to the light and warmth of God's word, the Bible.