



Quite Simply. Amazing.

growing guide

Watering: Using Recycled Water

Homeowners have options during the drought and watering bans

Keeping garden plants alive during conditions of extended heat is difficult enough, but when combined with a shortage of water, it may seem impossible. Here are some tips from Dean Ramseyer, Horticulturist at Hoerr Nursery, for making the best of a bad situation.

Prioritize – First of all, plants are replaceable, but your most valuable or vulnerable plants should receive the first drink. If you have to choose to maintain some and let others go, consider:

- Replacement cost – annuals and perennials are reasonably inexpensive; you can always replenish your display a little later in the season with a fall collection of blooming plants
- Value to you – heirloom or collectibles need your first attention
- Lawns – can generally go dormant and recover, however a newly seeded or sodded lawn may not have deep enough roots to survive. Better to water longer and less often.

Improve your watering methods and conservation techniques:

- Water at soil surface, not up in the air or over the foliage; this minimizes fast evaporation of liquids, which then never get to the roots of the plant
- Water slowly, so that it is fully absorbed by the soil, and doesn't simply run out the bottom or down the sides of the pot
- Water in the early evening, so the plant has an extended period to reabsorb the water before the heat of the next day.
- Move portable plants to a shady location
- Provide temporary cover to unmovable plants – shade cloth over the plant or a cardboard/wood screen to the south or west side of the plant to break the impact of direct sun
- Mulch – dry grass clippings, straw, bark, even newspaper can shade the soil and slow its moisture loss – apply a 1-2" deep layer around and under the

plant, keeping it just away from the trunk or stem

- Rotate grey (recycled) water products – continually using the same grey water can cause buildups that plants dislike – try to cycle various kinds of reclaimed water to minimize the effects on plants, blend recycled water with clear water if possible
- Construct simple 'rainbarrels' – any type of bucket will hold what rain we do get; place them at the ends of your gutter downspouts and be ready when the rain comes
- In garden beds, cultivate the top inch or so of soil before watering. More water will be absorbed rather than running off the surface.

What water can you use?

- Dehumidifier water – can be used anywhere, it has been purified through the air extraction process
- Dishes – dishwater has a high concentration of soap content, so should be used more sparingly; be sure to catch the rinse water and use it too, or blend it with the dishwater to dilute the soap content
- Dishsoaps vary in their impact; Ivory is the mildest and safest. Try not to use those that are "grease cutters", and always avoid getting the soapy water on the plant foliage
- Laundry – use the mildest of laundry soaps, and not detergent based soaps. Keep in perspective whether you need to clean deep dirt, or just wash out odors and light soiling. You may be able to switch to dish soap, hand soap, or hair shampoo and obtain adequate results in the short term. The rinse water is actually better, but do not use softeners in the rinse cycle.



Hoerr Nursery
8020 N. Shade Tree Dr.
Peoria, IL 61615
309/691-4561
FAX309/691-1834



Quite Simply. Amazing.

growing guide

Watering: Tips

HOW TO WATER

It is important that moisture penetrates to the roots of your plants. Even with adequate rainfall, it still is necessary to hand water the plants. If the rain was one inch or less and your landscape plantings are mulched with a decorative rock and black plastic, watering them is absolutely essential to prevent them from dying.

- Individually hand water each tree, shrub or small plant, giving it a long, deep drink with a hose. Watering with a lawn irrigation system can cause problems by either keeping the plants too wet, or not watering deep enough.
- Using a hose with water running at low pressure, place it in the center of the plant. Watch that the water penetrates the root zone immediately around the plant, and does not run off its surface without penetrating the soil. Applying the water directly to the root area at a slow rate ensures adequate moisture to the roots.
- The soil in the soil ball will dry out more quickly than the loose soil around it, so when you check for moisture be sure to check the soil ball directly. Be aware that plants can be overwatered, too, especially where the native soil is poor. To check for overwatering poke your finger down the side of the soil ball to feel how wet or dry it is.

SHRUB and TREE WATERING

Summer - For the first three weeks after planting, water every second or third day, and once a week through summer thereafter. If the weather is very hot, windy and dry increase the frequency to prevent wilt, particularly on small, tender plants or lawns.

Fall - Discontinue watering when there is at least one inch of rainfall per week, otherwise hand water about once a week

Late Fall to Winter - If there is inadequate rainfall, water the plants every 2 weeks until frost. When the tree leaves drop, make a final application of water just before the ground freezes.

Subsequent spring and summer - Water trees and shrubs deeply every couple of weeks, as weather dictates.

LAWN WATERING

Sodded lawns require daily watering for 3 weeks after installation, except in fall when

once every 2 days is adequate. Thoroughly soak the sod each time. After about four weeks, water the established sod only once per week, applying one inch of water.

Seeded lawns require one inch of water daily, until all the grass has germinated. If adequate rainfall occurs to sufficiently moisten the top inch of soil, there is no need to water that day. When the lawn is two inches high, reduce the watering to one inch of water per week, or as is needed to maintain actively growing, green grass.

ESTABLISHED LAWN WATERING

Professional sources strongly recommend watering lawns that have gone dormant (brown). Applying about 1/2" of water every couple of weeks will not 'green up' the turf, but it will prevent desiccation of the plant crown. Additionally, stay off dormant turf as much as possible, and plan for a fall aeration to enhance the lawn recovery. Fertilizers, seed and water are all more effective on a lawn that has been core aerated.

LAWN MOWING—Seeded or Sodded

Begin mowing your lawn as soon as it reaches 2"-3" tall. Set your lawn mower at its highest setting to avoid scalping the new lawn, and lower it a notch with subsequent mowings. It may be necessary to discontinue watering for 24 hours to allow the soil to dry to mow your lawn.

FERTILIZING YOUR LANDSCAPE

Most plants will respond to a liquid fertilizer while they are being established. Apply Miracle-Gro once every 3 weeks while you are watering the plants to replace the nutrients lost due to heavy watering.

Plants Which Do Not Tolerate Overwatering

Hemlock, Juniper, Spruce, and Yew

Plants Which Dry Out Quickly

Barberry, Dogwood, , Potentilla, and Spirea.

OTHER TIPS

Smaller plants like annuals and perennials dry out more quickly. Be sure to watch and water regularly.

Container gardens will need watering every day.

Adequately watered sod should spring back when trampled. If it looks limp or dull, it's time to water!



Hoerr Nursery
8020 N. Shade Tree Dr.
Peoria, IL 61615
309/691-4561
FAX309/691-1834



Quite Simply. Amazing.

growing guide

Watering: Q & A

Watering almost becomes an art, when you consider that more plants die from overwatering than dehydration.

Year after year the most asked gardening question is "How often do I water my (fill in the blank)?"

In a perfect world we would quickly respond with "Water with 4.75 gallons of tepid water every 5 days, 23 hours and 19 minutes."

Unfortunately it's not a perfect world. The needs of every plant differ from garden to garden, often even in the same bed.

The fact is that more plants die from overwatering than from underwatering. All gardeners know the importance of water to our plants, so, in an attempt to do the right thing, we drown them.

Like every other aspect of gardening watering is 10% science, 90% art. So how much is too much and how little is too little? Though it's impossible to be specific, the answers below offer some guidelines.

Q : When I purchase a new plant I'm often told to "water it well when you plant it and from then on water enough to get it established but be careful not to overwater." What does that mean?

A : First of all the establishment period is usually one year for most plants, two years for trees and slower growing shrubs. Until plants are established, or locked in to their new location, they are susceptible to stress from any number of factors including overwatering.

Now here's the translation: 'Water it well when you plant it' means that whenever you install any plant always water it in with enough water to *saturate the root ball and the amended soil.*

'...water enough to get it established' translates to applying water at the right time in enough quantity to sustain a healthy, vigorous plant. It may be every other day, once a week or only once a month.

Here's how to know. Always check first. Move some of the mulch back and look at the soil around the plant. Does it look moist? Then don't water. Still not sure? Stick your finger in plant ball about two inches deep or turn over some soil. If it feels moist, don't water.

It's always better to slightly underwater than overwater. Roots grow in oxygen, not water, and quickly adapt to drier situations. If a soil is too wet root rot, an encompassing term for various ills, sets in and once it progresses beyond a certain point there is nothing you can do but watch your plant die. If you're ever in doubt, don't water. Wait a day and check again.

When water is required allow it to run long enough to soak the entire root area. It will probably take much longer than you realize and the only way to know if the moisture is penetrating deep enough is by moving the mulch back and probing the soil.

Q : Can I tell by looking at my plants if they need water?

A : Yes, with practice. Dry plants wilt but be observant. The initial stages of wet wilt resembles dry wilt. Check first by looking at and feeling the soil.

Q : How often should I water established plants?

A : During a normal temperature and rainfall year you may not have to water at all. Just because it's summer and you're hot and thirsty doesn't mean your garden is parched. When we enter an extreme situation, like a drought, you'll know it.



Hoerr Nursery
8020 N. Shade Tree Dr.
Peoria, IL 61615
309/691-4561
FAX309/691-1834