

## ASK THE MASTER GARDENER WATERING PLANTS

For optimum health of yards and gardens the water requirement is equal to one inch of water per week during the growing season. Plants benefit most from deep, infrequent, slow irrigation to help insure quality root systems and healthy plants.

Lawns are best watered by overhead sprinklers, such as oscillating arm sprinklers, that deliver slow, even water. Grass should be watered when the soil dries out, but before the grass begins to wilt. A good way to check how much water your lawn is getting is to place empty tuna fish cans in various positions inside the sprinkling pattern and check how long it takes to fill them. It is best to water deeply to a six to twelve inch depth. Fewer deep waterings require less total water.

Trees, shrubs and landscape plants should be watered just inside and outside the drip line or outer edges of the plant. Their water requirements are best met by applying water in a low volume over a long period of time to allow the soil to become saturated in the root zone. A soaker hose or drip irrigation system are good choices. Inspecting the soil is a good method of determining when water is necessary. Mulching materials placed over the soil will reduce evaporation, reduce water runoff, allow better water penetration to the root zone and limit weed growth.

Vegetable gardens and bedding plants also benefit from deep, infrequent, slow irrigation. Make sure the water gets to the entire root zone of the plant. Check the soil around the expected root zone with a trowel. The entire root zone should be moistened before the plants show signs of wilting. Soaker hoses or drip irrigation are the best choices. Mulching the soil with grass clippings, straw, ground leaves, compost, etc. will greatly reduce the amount of evaporation. As a precaution do not use grass clippings that have had a weed-and-feed type treatment on your gardens.

Container plants need special attention since plants in pots dry out fast during warm, sunny conditions. It may be necessary to water fuschias, for example, more than once a day. Check the soil moisture at least once a day and keep the soil moist.

Plants, lawns and gardens should be watered in the early morning or late afternoon to minimize loss through evaporation.

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