

## Dealing with Drought

- **Mulch!** Use bark dust or newspapers (not the colored sections) covered with three inches of mulch to keep weeds out and moisture in. Black plastic with soaker hoses underneath works well in the vegetable garden. Some plants will not do well if heavily mulched before the soil warms up in the spring.
- **Plants which aren't fertilized heavily require less water.**
- **Plants watered less frequently (but deeply) are forced to grow deep roots.**
- If you **water as early in the day as possible** during warm weather, less water is lost by evaporation.
- **Soaker hoses and drip emitters** are efficient ways to distribute water to plants, but remember to use a timer of some sort. One hundred eighty feet of soaker hose of the same brand can be linked, as long as the ground is level. Diameters as small as a quarter inch are available in soaker hoses.
- **Use a moisture meter** to determine whether you need to water.
- **Group plants by water needs.**
- **Use a rain barrel** to gather and store water. Used food-grade plastic 55-gallon barrels can be purchased from Yoshida's in Portland (for approximately \$3) and equipped as rain barrels for under \$10. One can purchase a modifier for a downspout so that rain water can be diverted into a rain barrel. Rain barrel water could be a cause of "damping off" disease in seedlings, so exercise caution.
- **Use polymers** in potting soil and/or **mulch potted plants. Select non-porous containers.**
- **Collect water** that otherwise goes down the drain while you wait for warm/hot water for washing dishes or bathing.
- **Use shut-off valves** on sink, tub and shower taps in the house and **hose-end cutoffs** when watering by hand outdoors.
- **Let the grass go brown** during our dry season. It will green up again when the rains return.
- **Use a broom instead** of a hose to clear debris from driveways, sidewalks, patios.
- **Choose native plants** for your landscape and those adapted to wet, cold springs for the vegetable garden.

Shop local garden stores and nurseries or consult mail-order or internet sources of garden supplies for some of the less common products mentioned in this article.