

## How & When to Water Your Garden

Here are some tips on when and how to water your garden or potted plants.

### Potted plants

If you have potted plants or hanging baskets, water slowly until all the soil in the pot is moist and water runs out the bottom. It is important for all of the soil in the pot to be moistened so the roots can take up water. It is also important to allow the pot to dry out between watering, as roots also need air. Do not leave the pot in a dish full of water, as this will cause the roots to rot.



### Gardens

Just like a potted plant, gardens need water if the soil dries out. You can wait to water a garden a bit longer, because the roots of the plants go deeper into the soil, accessing moisture that may not be evident on the top of the soil.

To check the soil for moisture move the mulch out of the way and push a trowel or spade into the bed about 4 - 6 inches and see if the soil is only dry on top, or if it is dry all the way down. If it is only dry on top, you could wait a day or two, especially if it is not too hot out (which will dry the garden), or if rain is expected. Keep in mind that our soil is sandy and drains quickly, drying out the beds faster than soil with more clay or composted materials. Don't assume that rain will take care of the needs of the plants. Rain may only penetrate the soil an inch or so, so check deeper to be sure.

### How Much Water Is Right?

- **Focus on the root zone.** Remember that it's the roots that need access to water, not the leaves. Wetting the foliage is a waste of water and can promote the spread of disease.
- **Water deeply and thoroughly.** Annuals concentrate their roots in the first 6" of soil; for perennials, shrubs and trees, it's the first 12". Use your finger or a shovel to check the progress.

**For new plantings**, plan on watering twice per day, morning and evening. If you are using a sprinkler that reaches the whole garden, plan on at least ½ hour each time. If using a hose, plan on 1-2 minutes per plant, but rotate around the bed rather than concentrating on each plant for that time period, so the water has a chance to absorb and doesn't run off.

**For mature gardens**, check the dryness of the soil. Remember that even if it rains, it may only penetrate an inch or so, leaving the roots dry. The gardens will look better if they have water. Plants that are not getting enough water may look wilted, or their leaves may curl. It is best to water in the morning before the heat of the day.

- **Water slowly.** It is of no value if the water runs down the outside of the root ball, leaving the roots at the core of the plant dry. This can happen if you water too quickly or apply too much water at once. Slower watering is usually more effective. The key is to ensure that water gets to the root zone — whether you are tending seedlings, watering houseplants, watering a row of tomatoes or soaking thirsty shrubs and trees.
- **Water only when needed.** Too much water can be just as damaging to plants as too little. The soil should not remain soggy between waterings.