

COPING WITH DROUGHT



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Extended periods of dry weather put great stress on the plants in your landscape. This stress can result in stunted growth and makes the plants more susceptible to certain insects and diseases. If the plants can be reached by a hose and if your city's watering restrictions allow, follow these guidelines to help your plants make it through a drought.

GRASS...Newly sodded or seeded lawns will need watering, but most varieties of established grass will go dormant and re-green when adequate moisture returns in all but the most severe drought situations. If you do decide to water an established lawn, you must be consistent. Watering occasionally on a haphazard schedule will do more harm than good. The lawn needs about 1" of water per week. The best way to do this is to water each area once per week for about 4 hours (most sprinklers apply about 1/4" of water per hour). This allows for a thorough soaking deep into the soil. Grass roots will be encouraged to grow deeper. Watering a little every day encourages shallow roots, making grass more susceptible to disease and drought. Do not water so late in the day that the grass stays wet after dark. Diseases thrive in wet, cool conditions. Newly sodded or seeded lawns will need more attention. If possible, seed during late August to September, a time of cooler temperatures and less weed competition.

Using a product like TAZO-B liquid will help establish a deep root system. The main ingredient of this product is Azospirillum bacterium which fixes nitrogen in the soil and promotes root development and growth. A deeper root system will help your lawn through periods of drought.

NEWLY PLANTED TREES & SHRUBS...Normally you would want to water newly planted material about once or twice per week. Set the hose beside the plant and let it run fairly slowly for 15-20 minutes. The frequency and length of watering will vary depending on the size of the plant and the type of soil. Clay soil generally does not dry out as fast as sandy soil and plants grown in clay usually need less frequent watering. Very hot, dry, and/or windy weather will require you to water more often. Still, keep the "more deeply, less frequently" rule in mind.

ESTABLISHED TREES & SHRUBS...Roots of fully mature plants are much closer to the soil surface than commonly believed and thus, do suffer during hot, dry weather. However, because they have an extensive root system, established plants cope better with these conditions than do newly planted trees and shrubs. Trees and shrubs that have been planted for less than 5 years should receive your attention. Water these plants about every 10 days for 20-90 minutes, depending on the size of the plant and the type of soil. Do not set the hose at the trunk of the plant, but rather out in the root zone.

EVERGREENS...Because evergreens do not lose their foliage in the fall, they will need consistent watering until the ground freezes. Plants that lose their leaves in the fall should be allowed to slowly go dormant by slacking off somewhat on their watering schedule as soon as the weather cools (usually around Labor Day).

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PERENNIALS...Newly planted perennial plants should be watered consistently through dry periods. Once they are established and have developed a good root system, some may do well even if rain is minimal. You need to be sure of the water requirements of your particular perennial plants to determine how much to water them during times of drought. If you aren't sure, consult with our experts.

CONTAINER PLANTS...Containers are a world unto themselves. Even if the plants you use are "drought tolerant," when they are in a container "drought" comes sooner. There is limited soil to retain moisture in a container, and consistent watering is essential. To help retain moisture in a container, use a potting soil that contains polymers that soak up water and slowly release it into the soil as it dries. If you prefer, you can purchase a product like "Soil Moist" to add to your soil before planting. This product also holds moisture and releases it slowly as the soil dries out. If you decide to add Soil Moist to your soil before planting, it is very important that you follow the directions pertaining to how much soil moist to add. The product expands when watered and you don't want to uproot your plantings!

HANGING BASKETS...Hanging Baskets should be treated much like container plants. Use potting soil with water-holding polymers or Soil Moist when planting. They have the added disadvantages of being up in the wind and generally in smaller containers, which may dry them out even more quickly. If you are going away for the weekend, you can take down your hanging baskets and place them on the ground in a protected spot if you can't find anyone to water for you while you're away. During the hottest parts of our summer, it would not be unreasonable to think of watering hanging baskets in sunny locations twice a day.

