



GUIDE TO WATERING

Why is keeping my new plants watered so important?

Plants, like all living things, need water to survive. This is especially true for ones that have been newly planted or transplanted. Plants get the water they need by taking it from the surrounding soil through their root system. When a plant has a large, deep, well-established root system it can get the water it needs more easily because it can take from a larger surrounding area. This is why proper watering of newly planted shrubs, flowers, and trees is essential for their survival. New plants have a small root system and therefore a limited area to take water from. This limited area must be kept moist at all times.

How much water should I put on my plants and how often should I do it?

During the heat of the summer, new shrubs and trees should be watered 2-3 times a week, depending on the amount of rain and the temperature. Flowers should be watered 3-4 times a week because of their shallow root system. If the leaves of the plant begin to sag or wilt, water it immediately. When you water, make sure you put enough on the plant to completely wet the loose soil directly around the plant and also enough to soak into the surrounding undisturbed soil all the way to the base of the root ball. Doing this will encourage the root system to grow far and deep. Soaker hoses and setting your garden hose on trickle at the base of each plant are both excellent methods of applying the water efficiently. Despite all the gadgets you can get to measure the moisture content of the soil, the best and easiest method is the "Finger Test".

The Finger Test???

The finger test is quite simple. Push your index finger into the soil around the plant in 2 to 3 places up to at least the second knuckle. When you take your finger out, you should be able to feel the moisture. Visually, you should see individual and small clumps of dark soil matter sticking to your finger. When rubbed together, the particles should smear into mud. If this happens, the plant is in good shape and should not need much water if any. If the forecast is calling for really hot dry weather, it won't hurt to give the plants a little more water at this time. If all that comes out on your finger is a powdery dust, or the ground is too hard to penetrate, you need to water. If your finger comes out muddy, the plant has very recently been watered or your plant has been over watered. In this case, don't add any more water. Too much water in the soil will drown the root system and promote root rot.

Ideally this watering schedule should be kept up for at least the first season of the new plants' growth to help ensure a healthy root system. This healthy root system will allow the plant to take care of itself more and more as it grows. Usually by the second to third season, most plants can do it on their own, though your plant would appreciate an occasional drink during hot and dry spells.