

TO WATER OR NOT TO WATER?

You have just install your new plants and proper watering is now most critical to their success.

Q: How do I know when to water?

A: The simple answer is when Mother Nature doesn't provide rain and /or when the ground is dry. The best way to determine ground moisture is to dig down 3-4" - if the soil is damp, you do not need to water. Remember that plants in this climate are used to periods of heavy rain followed by periods of drying out.

Q: How much water should I apply?

A: The best rule is to thoroughly DRENCH the root zone of the new plants. Heavy deep watering (interspersed with periods of drying out) will promote deep healthy roots. For small areas hand watering with a garden hose works best. For large areas it may be impractical to water by hand, we recommend soaker hoses. Light watering (i.e. sprinkling with small amounts of water) will lead to shallow roots that will suffer during a drought. A thorough watering is like an 1" of rain.

Q: Is it possible to over water?

A: Yes! Over watering is defined as watering too frequently. It is essential that between watering that air be allowed to reenter the root zone (roots need oxygen to survive). Allowing the soil to dry out is also nature's way of controlling "root rot" diseases which thrive in constantly wet or saturated soil conditions. **DO NOT WATER YOUR PLANTS EVERYDAY - THE ROOTS WILL DROWN!**

More new plants die from over watering (too frequently) than die from drying out.

Q: What should I do?

A: As a rule of thumb:

- 1) Plants need the most water immediately following planting
- 2) When it rains 1/2" or more that will replace one watering
- 3) Water thoroughly twice per week - for the first three months and then once per week for the rest of the year (usually safe to end in November). It is a good idea to water on the same days each week (i.e. Monday and Friday)

Smaller plants will have smaller root balls and accordingly will have a tendency to dry out more quickly, so they may need to be watered more frequently than larger plants.

Special Tips #1: It is preferred to water in the morning and apply water only to the soil and not the foliage. Constantly wet leaves are highly susceptible to bacterial and fungal diseases.

Special Tip #2: Applying a thin layer of mulch 1-2" to the bare earth that surrounds the root zone will reduce the number of times you need to water by 50%. The mulch will effectively reduce the amount of evaporation (and "wicking") moisture from the soil. It also shades the soil keeping it cooler in the summer months.