

TIPS FOR DRY GARDENS

Firstly Don't Panic! Climate change may be happening but its gradual and radical redesigning of gardens is not necessary yet! Avoid fads! Gravel gardens are naturally arid and aren't necessarily nice environments to live in.

Climate change doesn't necessarily mean that we will be getting drier all round. It may be that we get wetter in the winter. So the garden design issues become more complex than just preparing for hotter, drier conditions. Good gardening techniques will overcome any of the problems we face and are environmentally friendly too.

In The Border

During prolonged periods of dry weather in the summer months many plants in the garden can suffer from lack of water. To help keep them healthy and looking good here are a few tips.

Early in the season apply a bark mulch to a depth of 2 inches. This will reduce water loss by evaporation by at least 75%. It also prevents the soil from forming a tough crust that is hard to 're-wet'. This is particularly important for clay soils.

Watering technique is vital, water thoroughly twice a week rather than a little every day. This will ensure the water reaches a good depth and not just the top inch. Plants are then encouraged to put out deeper roots.

Water efficiently by using a micro-irrigation system which works by delivering water via drippers direct to the plant. Another alternative is the soaker hose which seeps water very slowly to an area 12 inches around the pipe. The pipe can be laid on the surface or buried.

Time your watering well – water in the evening or early in the morning to help reduce evaporation by the sun.

Feed with a slow release fertilizer such as Vitax Q4, pelleted feed so that nutrients are released over a controlled period when moisture is available.

Plant Selection suitable for dry conditions

Shrubs

Acacia
Berberis darwinii
Buddleja
Callistemon
Ceanothus
Choisya ternate
Convolvulus cneorum
Cordyline
Cistus
Elaeagnus
Escallonia
Griselinia
Hebe
Lavandula
Olearia
Osmanthus delavayi
Pittosporum
Rosmarinus
Santolina
Senecio
Tamarix
Viburnum tinus

Trees

Arbutus unedo
Catalpa bignonioides
Cercis siloquastrum
Eucalyptus
Gleditsia
Morus nigra, alba
Quercus ilex
Robinia

Perennials

Campanula
Centranthus
Dianthus
Erysimum
Nepeta
Oenothera
Penstemon
Thymus