

GARDENING DURING A DROUGHT

Some suggestions from Mike Burks to help you through a long dry spell in the garden.

Firstly, it's a good idea if you have space, to save as much rain water as you can by using water butts. Rainwater is really good quality for plants as it doesn't have any of the chemicals in it that are used by the water companies in processing tap water. It also is likely to be more acidic than most of our local tap water and so will also have a beneficial effect on our gardens.



It's best then to work out what actually needs watering. Plants that have been established for a number of years are likely to be able to find their own water and therefore shouldn't need any. Any that have been planted in the last 12 to 18 months will need some help though as will tubs and hanging baskets.

To get the best effect it would be a good idea to water out of the heat of the day so in the early morning or late evening. This will reduce the amount of water that is lost through evaporation and so more will get to your plants.

Soak plants really well 3 or 4 times a week rather than a little bit every day but with tubs and baskets increase this to daily watering.

For borders the use of a good depth of mulch – a layer of fibrous material such as Composted Bark, Blooming Amazing and Chipped Bark will help conserve moisture. Not only that but it will also help reduce weed growth, will protect your soil from heavy rain when it finally arrives and will also improve the soil quality in the long term.

In the vegetable garden or on a newly planted border seep hoses can be used to water larger areas. Such hoses are made from recycled car tyres and when connected to a garden hose the water will gently seep out onto the soil. Because there is no splashing the efficiency of the amount of water that gets to your plants is very high. Seep hoses can easily be roiled up and moved to another area or can be left permanently.



Take a decision about your lawn; to keep it green and lush will take a significant amount of water. Maybe just tolerate the fact that it will be brown for a few weeks and then be amazed at its ability to return to its full glory as the rain returns. You can help buy not mowing quite so tightly too.

Installing mini irrigation systems has become very popular in recent times. A main pipe is laid around the perimeter of the garden and from this "spaghetti" tubes and added on the end of which is a sprinkler or better still a dripper which can be inserted into your pots, hanging baskets or growbags as well as in borders. A timer can be used back at the tap to control how often and for how long the watering is carried out. These systems can be really efficient getting water precisely where just needed but they need to be lived with and the nozzles adjusted as all plants have different levels of thirst but after a while with good observation this is easy to work out.



The use of Rootgrow when planting can also reduce the amount of watering required because it enables plants to find their own water. Rootgrow contains mycorrhizal fungi which are naturally occurring and are a sort of mould which attaches itself to the roots of plants and grows out into the soil like an extension to the root system. It occurs naturally in the wild and by adding it when planting it significantly improves the establishment and success of plants.

In tubs and hanging basket the use of moisture retentive gels can give a helping hand in making sure plants get enough water. In times of abundance the gel (which can be added to your compost when planting) swells up absorbing water. In times of drought the water is released to the plants.

Although all the time spent watering might sound like a chore it can be very useful in keeping tabs on pest or disease issues and also enjoying the detail and the beauty of the plants in your garden.

For further gardening tips of all kinds take a look at the wealth of information on our website – or phone us / email us / bring us a sample or a picture and let us help guide you to success!

