How to Water Your Plants

Correct watering is the most important way to care for your new or existing plants. Our wide variation in soil textures, ranging from pure sand or gravel, to heavy clay, requires just as varied a watering routine.

Don't keep your plants constantly saturated with frequent waterings, and don't allow them to completely dry out and wither the foliage. The proper method is somewhere in between these two extremes. Plants need oxygen just as much as they need water; you want to water deeply, then allow the plant to dry slightly. Frequent watering keeps the soil saturated and prevents air movement through the soil. The best method is to apply water in a slow stream using a hose or drip system. The goal is to deeply saturate the root system, generally down to a depth of 8-12 inches depending on the plant size. Allowing the plant to dry slightly in between watering, short of desiccation, will help the plant to establish a root system that will tolerate harsh drought conditions.

How often you have to water depends on your soil, the weather, the size of the plant, if it is a new planting or established one, and if it is in a container or in the ground. Plants in containers, and newly planted trees, shrubs, and perennials will need more frequent watering than established plants. Until you become familiar with your plants' watering needs, it's important to know how to check your soil so you know when it is time to water.

To check your soil, dig down 4-8 inches (depending on the size of the plant – 4 inches for perennials and small shrubs, deeper for large shrubs and trees). Squeeze the soil from that depth. If it makes a moist ball there is enough moisture in the soil; do not water. If it crumbles and breaks apart, then it is time to water. Do not concern yourself if the top inch or so of soil is dry.

As a general rule, newly planted trees require 10 gallons of water for every inch diameter of the tree. Large shrubs require 7-10 gallons, and small shrubs 4-5 gallons. Once established, water needs will vary based on the specific variety of each tree or shrub. Establishment can take anywhere from 1 – 5 years depending on the size of the plant. Trees generally take one year to establish for each inch of trunk diameter. Small shrubs and perennials usually establish in one growing season.

McCord's Garden Center & Landscaping

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