



How to Water New Plants

Start new plants off right!

Deeper, infrequent watering helps plants grow healthy extensive roots that stand up better to drought stress. Smart watering makes a big difference in the health of new plants!

Year 1

Spring through fall, when weather is dry.

- When planting: Water plants as soon as you get them in the ground. Allow the water to soak in, then water again until the soil is thoroughly moistened.
- Week one: Water plants daily or every other day. Recently planted roots will absorb moisture from a small area until they begin to grow.
- Week two onward: Unless the weather is extremely hot and dry, you may be able to decrease watering frequency to two or three times per week until the fall rains begin.

Years 2 & 3

Water deeply once or twice per week. How often and how long you water depend on your soil texture.

After year 3

Plants should be established, and thrive with less watering. Drought-tolerant plants may need no supplemental water, whereas shallow-rooted plants or plants with greater water needs may need water weekly. Many plants may need watering only once or twice a month in dry weather.

Other tips

- Use water wisely! Water plants when they need it, and apply water according to your soil type and the weather. Do not apply water faster than the soil can absorb it.
- Water in the morning, so less water is lost to evaporation.
- Choose the right watering method. Soaker hoses and drip irrigation apply water directly to the soil and reduces evaporation. If you are planting a few plants in an existing planting bed, hand watering can get the new plants the water they need while not overwatering the rest of the plants.
- Know your soil because it affects watering frequency and duration.
- Check soil moisture before watering. Probe soil with a spade or trowel. Generally, you want the soil to be dry an inch or two below the surface before you water.
- Recheck soil after watering. At least an hour after you water (or two hours with clay soil), probe soil to see how deeply the water penetrated. If it didn't reach the root zone, you may need to increase your watering. If the area is soggy, try cutting back on watering.
- Encourage deep roots by allowing the top inch or two of soil to dry before watering again.
- Pick the right plant for the right place. Choose plants that are pest-resistant, require less water, and match the sun, shade, and soil in your yard.
- Avoid planting in hot, dry weather which can easily stress plants. If you must plant in summer, plant in the cool of the morning when less water is lost to evaporation.
- Mulch retains moisture. Mulching the surface of the soil reduces evaporation so you can water less often.

Special considerations

- Drought-tolerant plants need regular water until they are established.
- Planted containers tend to dry out quickly, particularly unglazed clay pots. Check them daily during the summer by sticking your finger into the soil. If it's dry down to the first knuckle on your index finger, add water. Always apply enough water so that some drips out of the bottom drain hole.
- Shallow-rooted plants such as rhododendrons, azaleas, heathers, and bedding plants may need more frequent watering than other plants.
- Young trees need deep regular watering. During times of little or no rain, water deeply once a week until trees become established.