

Efficient Watering During Water Restrictions

From the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service



When watering cannot be avoided but water supplies or the time to water are limited, then the art of watering needs to become a science so as to become as efficient as possible.

- ◇ One obvious way of making the most efficient use of limited amounts of water is to irrigate only at those stages of growth when the most beneficial response can be obtained such as at planting time and right before a hard freeze on evergreens.
- ◇ Avoid the “spray ‘em down” method. Watering with a sprinkler or hose sprayer squirts water everywhere, but not much of it really gets down into garden soil.
- ◇ Apply water to the ground only—direct application of water to the base of the plant provided it is applied slowly enough to be absorbed by the soil uses less water. Drip or trickle irrigation systems fit gardeners needs perfectly, uses 30-50% less water.
- ◇ Create your own Drip System with a milk jug. Simply poke a very small hole on the underside of the jug, fill it with water, put the top back on and place it next to a small tree or shrub. The small hole and the semi-vacuum in the container will cause the jug to slowly drip.
- ◇ Deep infrequent waterings are more effective and efficient than frequent shallow watering.
- ◇ Gray water, which is recycled shower, bath and laundry water can be used to keep thirsty plants alive but some precaution should be followed:
 - Never use gray water for direct human/animal consumption.
 - Gray water should not be used directly on anything that may be eaten.
 - Gray water should not be sprayed, allowed to puddle, or run off.
 - Use only water from clothes washing, bathing or the bathroom sink. Do not use water that has come in contact with soiled diapers, meat or poultry, or anyone with an infectious disease.
 - Gray water applications should be rotated with fresh water to leach out any harmful build-up of salts.
- ◇ On a small plant, use a tray of ice cubes placed in a circle 6 to 12 inches from its base of

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NEW GARDEN
LANDSCAPING & NURSERY

newgarden.com
email:info@newgarden.com

New Garden Village
5572 Garden Village Way
Greensboro, NC 27410
phone: 336-665-0291

New Garden Gazebo
3811 Lawndale Dr.
Greensboro, NC 27455
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the plant. This will send water slowly down to the roots.

- ◇ Mulch to retain moisture in the soil. Mulching also helps control weeds that compete with garden plants for water. A 2 to 3 inch layer should help considerably.
- ◇ Water late at night or early in the morning to reduce evaporation losses.
- ◇ An occasional, ample watering is more effective than numerous superficial waterings.
- ◇ Collect runoff from roofs and paved areas for garden use.
- ◇ Plant hardy varieties of grass, trees, shrubs, and flowers that require minimum water.
- ◇ Use a broom not the hose to clean the garage, sidewalks and driveway.
- ◇ Drive your car onto your lawn before you wash it. Water the grass as you wash your car.
- ◇ Plant trees to lower air and soil temperature, this reduces plant and soil moisture loss.
- ◇ Use paving or mulch to reduce the size of its lawn so you'll have less grass to water.

