

## How to properly water your new (and existing) plants

We humans lose water all the time. In fact we perspire and lose more when it's hot and humid. That's because when it's humid it's harder for us to perspire (evaporation is slower due to the higher humidity) though, even in cooler months we also lose water which we must replace by regularly drinking water. Plants also lose water in an equivalent process called *transpiration*. They too lose more water when it's hot but unlike we humans more so when it's also dry, but then again they also lose water all year round like us. Therefore they too rely on regular additions of water, mainly in the form of a *good rainfall*. Plants, however, have an advantage over us humans for they can store water in their root systems to tie them over till the next *good rainfall*. The problem is that often rainfall is not sufficient or often enough for your newly installed plants, for they have yet to develop a large enough root system to store all the water that they will need till the next supplement of a *good rainfall*.

Note I define a *good rainfall* as either a light rainfall period of 12-16 hours or more or a medium rainfall for a period of 6-8 hours or more. Rainfalls from a thunderstorm and long periods of heavy rainfalls are practically worthless as the rain comes down too fast to be absorbed properly, mostly running off into the streets and into the gutters/sewers. Importantly be aware that *good rainfalls* in the months of June, July, August and September are rare. Therefore, in most cases you will need to supplement the inadequate rainfall we receive here in MD, all year long and especially during the period of June through September.

### How and When to Water?

In general you need to water two to three times a week or at least once every two to four days unless we get one of the good rainfalls as I described above. When we receive such a rainfall, then you can plan to water 24 to 48 hours later unless we receive another good soaking. Overall, water all new plantings twice a week. Plants need a minimum of ½ to 1 inch of water a week (whether it's water from Mother Nature or from you) so water them at least twice a week as described below from April through September during their first two years after planting. (Continuing this practice throughout their life is also a good idea.)

*What is the best way to water my plants?* In most cases watering by hand with a hose and nozzle or via a watering can is not going to do any good. First of all you'd have to water the plants with a gentle light flow and keep it up in that one small area (an area no larger than 6 by 6 feet) for at least 20 to 30 minutes, before moving on to another area. To do that you'd need a lot of excess time on your hands and the patience of a Saint. I don't know about you but that doesn't even close to describing me! So I recommend you use a sprinkler, preferably a good oscillating one. Once you set it up to cover the area you need to water, leave it in place for at least 3 to 4 hours. Yes, three to four hours! It takes that long to deliver from 1/4 to 1/2 of an inch of water to the site being watered. Then if you need to cover another area, move the sprinkler to that area and leave it in place for another 3 to 4 hours.

*Does it matter what time of day I water?* Unless the air is very warm (75 degrees plus) and the relative humidity is very low (less than 30 percent) the amount which will evaporate into the air will be rather trivial so the answer is; not really. Yes, a little bit more will be lost to the air during mid day but it's better to water the plants than not water at all. The preferred time of day would be early morning to around noon, but if all else fails, watering up to an hour before sunset works too. Watering later than that may encourage mildew and mold growth on certain susceptible plants but, believe me, dehydration is far more damaging.

*What about the occasional mandated weekend and Holiday watering restrictions?* Water your plants at a minimum every day that it is legal to do so. Follow the above guidance of what constitutes a *good rainfall*.

*What happens if I take a vacation?* Take a vacation? Do your plants get a vacation? No. So you should take a vacation?! **Wait till October or November!!** But seriously, vacations can be an issue. That's why when we plant we add these special gels to the planting site to act as an emergency reservoir of water for your plants. If you are watering regularly, taking a one week or shorter hiatus from watering should not be a problem. Longer than that, see if a neighbor or a friend or even a relative (*what you don't consider your relative to be a friend, so sad!*) can water your plants for you. If you don't water regularly then these gels will have already been tapped dry by your plants and as such will be of no use during your hiatus.

Remember we can't be responsible for **Acts of Nature** such as floods, lightning, hurricanes, tornadoes, severe windstorms etc..., or **Abuse** such as running over the plant with your feet or (shudder!) a lawnmower, or **Neglect**. Failure to water is considered neglect. Neglect can void any warranties given.

Don't neglect your plants, and water, water, water them.

Should you have any questions just call me.

Thanks.

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