

Tips for a Water Wise Garden

1. Water infrequently, deeply, and thoroughly. This will encourage rooting and greater tolerance to dry spells.
2. Mulch soil surface. Mulching cuts down on water loss due to evaporation. A two-inch layer of mulch or compost is recommended. Apply mulches to shrubs, trees, annuals, vegetable gardens, and even containers.
3. Shelter container plants. Move containers to shade areas to keep them from drying quickly in hot windy areas.
4. Use “Water Wise” plants. Plant rates “water wise” need less water to survive. Find out which plants (once well established) can get along with less water. Ask your California Certified Nurseryman which plants work well with limited watering.
5. Install a drip or other water conservation irrigation system. Slow drip and deep root watering systems can save up to 60 % of all water used in garden care.
6. Use correct watering techniques. Water early in the day especially as the weather warms to reduce evaporation loss. Water less often for longer length of time to encourage deep root growth.
7. Provide proper soil penetration. Spike or aerate lawns to insure maximum water penetration. Or use soil penetration chemicals.
8. Don’t be a gutter flooder. Turn off lawn sprinklers before water is wasted as run-off into gutters and streets. Be sure your irrigation system is in proper working condition.
9. Properly condition and fertilize your soil. Water does not easily penetrate clay soils and water passes too quickly beyond the root zone of plants in sandy soil. Adding organic matter to clay and sandy soils will increase the penetrability of clay soils and the water holding capacity of sandy soils. Fertilize in moderation using a complete, balanced formula.
10. Cut lawns to proper height. Gradually let lawns reach a height of 3 4 inches. Longer blades of grass can mean going 3 to 4 days longer between waterings.
11. Discourage water competition from weeds. Keep them pulled and/or use herbicides to control weed growth or mulch to keep them from

growing.

12. Plant in groups. Group together plants having similar water requirements (Ferns- Azaleas Willows Alders).

Being “Water Wise” not only conserves water, but actually helps you achieve a healthy garden. And it can be colorful, too!

A message from the California Association of Nurserymen

Some Facts About Mulches

What is a mulch? A mulch is any material placed over the soil to reduce evaporation, to reduce or prevent weed growth, and to insulate the soil from extreme temperature changes.

What are some types of mulches? Homemade compost, lawn clippings, pine needles, chipper debris, rice hulls, straw and hay, aged sawdust, Douglas fir bark, shredded bark, commercial compost, peat moss

How much mulch do you need? If the particle size is over 4” apply mulch 3” to 4” thick. For small particles, ½” size, apply 1” to 2” thick. One cubic yard (27 cubic feet) of mulch covers 108 square feet 3” deep. Three cubic yards covers 1,000 square feet 1” deep. A two cubic foot bag covers 8 square feet 3” deep. A 5.6 cubic foot bale of peat moss will cover 400 square feet 2” to 3” deep.

Things to be aware of when using mulches Mulches do create a dark, cool, moist environment for earwigs, sowbugs, slugs, etc. Coarse textured mulches create more hiding places. To avoid nitrogen deficiency to your plants, be careful not to incorporate the mulch into the soil. Place the mulch on a smooth, firm, soil surface. If fine noncomposted mulches such as fresh sawdust or shavings are used apply 3 lbs. of a slow release nitrogen fertilizer (ureaform) per cubic yard of mulch material. Keep mulches away from stem or trunk of plants to avoid stem rot.

Remember to cut back on the amount of water applied after mulching.

Amador Master Gardeners

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