

Hot Weather Watering

Well we wished for this all winter and it's finally here, just a little more than we need at one time. I know you have worked hard to get your gardens and home looking spectacular with plants...so how do you help them during these hot times?

When to water:

The best time is in the early morning from about 4am to 9am. During this time the plants are used to having dew form on their leaves so getting watered is no great shock. Applying water at this time helps recharge the water holding capacity of the soil and reduces the chance of leaf burn (from the magnifying effects of water droplets) and disease incidence. Morning watering also reduces needless evaporation of water...do not water in the heat of the day unless absolutely necessary. If plants look particularly wilted in the evening you can apply water but try not to get the foliage wet...water the root system. A plant wilting on a hot day is normal...so if you know that the soil is moist than don't worry, once the heat is off the plant will pick back up

How much:

There are no hard and fast rules but it is far to say that you want to apply a deep watering. Remember many of those plants you planted had root systems that were 4"-12" deep, so watering them for just a few minutes only waters the top inch or so. This results in rapid wilting. It is best to saturate the soil and then let it soak in and re-run and water it again, repeating this cycle several times to insure that the water is penetrating down deeply. This goes for ground planted and well as potted plants. In potted plants we can see the water drain out...use that experience and timing to judge your duration when watering plants in the landscape. In general you should apply about 1.5"-2" of water per square foot per week...this is best determined by using a rain gauge. If you don't have one stop in at Bayport Flower Houses and pick up your complimentary rain gauge. As it heats up you may need to increase your watering quantity and frequency.

How to reduce water stress:

For newly planted plants, use a shower head nozzle on the end of a hose and water the base of each plant until the ground is saturated. Make sure that the plants are mulched to reduce evaporation for the soil. After establishment water can be reduced. Application of water by means of a drip or soaker hose is best. Try to avoid misting heads as watering tools...during hot times too much water is lost to the atmosphere. If your plants are in pots move to a shadier spot during times of high heat and humidity. Also, be mindful of A/C units, dryer vents, reflective surfaces and locate plants away from these areas.

Recovery:

Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, plants get burned. If the burn is on established trees and shrubs than more often than not they will recover. It might take a year or so for the new growth to fill in. Think about drought stress as the plant pruning off some of its limbs in order to conserve what little water is available. Once the heat abates and the water returns the plant will grow back. This is true for you lawn (brown is ok this time of year...)
With regards to annuals, perennials, hanging baskets and other plants, if burned back just cut off the dead and providing there are still buds alive the plant will branch back out when conditions are right. Remember that once the plant has "pruned" itself or you have cut it back than you will need to adjust the watering so as not to over water the plants. In addition, all this watering has probably leached out much of the fertilizer you applied so be sure to add a little as the season moves on to encourage new growth.

Stay cool...

Karl