

## Drought and your Garden – Irrigation

Practicing efficient irrigation is essential during periods of drought. Here are some best practices that should be followed to help increase water efficiency.

Drip irrigation systems are ideal for home gardens and can reduce water usage by 50%! Drip irrigation systems are relatively easy and inexpensive to set up and can be attached to timers for ease and to ensure plants are watered at the optimal time of the day. Drip irrigation applies just the right amount of water to only the plants that need it without overspray or runoff.

Check the soil moisture regularly to avoid over-application. Squeeze the soil in your hand; if it sticks together, it is moist and irrigation should be delayed. If the soil has dried out to a depth of 2-4 inches, plan to water. This is especially important if using mulch, where water can be held in the soil for longer periods of time.

Check your irrigation system and timer regularly. Fix any leaks! Irrigate early in the morning to avoid the wind and evaporation. Apply mulch 3 to 4 inches deep. Mulch decreases evaporation, keeps the soil cool and suppresses weeds. Weeds use valuable water to grow, get rid of the weeds. Avoid runoff, no matter how much you water concrete it will not grow.

Prioritize your plants. High priority plants include trees and shrubs. Medium priority plants include fruit trees, nut trees, perennials and vegetables. Low priority plants include annual flowers and herbs, and grass.

For your lawn. Irrigate between 9 pm and 10 am, this will reduce evaporation. Mow your lawn higher during warm weather. Each blade of grass will shade each other creating a cooler climate in the lawn. As a society we love our lawns and tend to over water and over fertilize. During a drought cut irrigation in half and do not fertilize.