

Waterwise watering

As responsible gardeners and home owners, what can we do to conserve water or take full advantage of the water we do use in the garden ? The following list is a good start.

- Use a tap timer or a programmed watering system. Forgotten sprinklers waste an enormous amount of water.
- Water less often but more deeply. Do not give the garden a light spray daily. It discourages the development of the deep roots that make your plants more robust.
- If an automatic irrigation system is installed, add a rain switch to avoid water in or soon after rain.
- Choose more drought tolerant lawn species such as Empire or Wintergreen. Don't cut lawns too short.
- If necessary, allow the lawn to dry off in summer. It will green up again quickly when it rains.
- Mulch all garden beds thickly and add plenty of compost to the soil to allow the water to penetrate easily. If the soil is persistently water resistant (Hydrophobic) ie if the water runs off and isn't absorbed into the soil, you could use a wetting agent.
- While fountains may be appealing, be aware that 50% of the water in a fountain can be lost through evaporation on a hot day.
- In urban areas, consider installing a rainwater tank to collect water for use on the garden.
- Dig in the garden to check water penetration of the soil, this will indicate whether to water more or less.

As a rule of thumb, most gardens and lawns can be watered for 20 minutes once a week in cooler months and twice a week in warm to hot weather.