

WATERING

Over-watering is the single most common cause of plant death

Too little, too much, what do I do?

Drainage Hole Rules - Without drainage holes container garden plants inevitably find themselves sitting in a soggy mess. Optimally, you want large drainage holes – ¾ inch in diameter is a good place to start. Put in as many drainage holes as possible, the more holes the better. Drainage holes should be covered so the soil won't leach out during watering. The tricky part is to cover the holes without completely blocking them - to keep the soil in while letting water drain out. There are several ways to do this.

Plastic Window Screening - Use cut pieces to fit the bottoms of pots. This is an easy way of covering drainage holes, letting water out and keeping soil in.

Packing Peanuts - A lot of people use packing peanuts in the bottom of pots. They are cheap and do work. Be careful, many peanuts are made of potato starch, when wet they melt into a slushy soup. Put a barrier of window screen between the soil and peanuts. This will make it easier at the end of the season when soil is removed from the pot.

Coco fiber, Moss or Burlap - These make great pot liners, particularly for wire or hanging baskets. They keep soil in and aid in keeping it moist. These liners can also be used to turn almost anything into a container.

Rocks - Rocks are cheap, plentiful and work, but you still need drainage holes. The disadvantage is with rocks and large containers. The rocks make the container extremely heavy and cumbersome to move. We recommend the use of packing peanuts for large containers.

Broken Pots – Break up broken pots into small chips and use in the bottom of your pot for drainage. This is an excellent way to recycle broken terracotta and ceramic pots.

Excessive/inadequate watering technique: An age old nemesis of container the gardener. When to or not to water? This is a hard question answer during times of changing weather and sun exposure. Pay close attention to how much exposure your container has to the sun and wind. Outside of the consumption of water by the plant, these are your two major factors of water evaporation. Watering a hanging basket in the sun is much different from a container on the ground in the shade.

Container plants have to be watered more often than plants growing in the ground. Watering should begin when the soil surface feels dry to the touch, but not before.

Frequency and amount of water depend on planting media, location, amount of sun, temperature, wind, type of plant, etc. Establish a watering routine. Monitor the plant and soil for signs of over/under watering. All plants are not watered the same, read the product tag prior to establishing the plant's water routine.

Completely dry Containers. Those that have been allowed to completely dry out may need to be soaked in water to rewet the soil. Most container grown plants, a thorough watering once or twice a week will be sufficient. Plants in plastic or solid containers will have to be watered less often than plants in porous containers or clay pots.

A plant which uses a lot of water, such as Fuchsias, or one that is pot-bound, may have to be watered daily or several times a day.

WARNING!!!

Be very careful not to keep the root system constantly soaking wet. Pathological (disease) problems will occur if air is excluded from the soil.

POT-BOUND: A subject for another day.

Symptoms of over-watering:

Leaves Change in Appearance - Usually the first sign of a plant receiving too much water. Leaves will first become yellow, and slowly wilt and wither.

No New Leaf Growth - Once the already formed leaves have wilted, an over-watered plant will stop forming new leaves entirely.

Root Rot. Too much water in a container can lead to root rot as it saturates the soil, depriving the roots of needed oxygen.

Mold Growth - Over-watering plants create a moist environment ideal for spurring the growth of algae and other fungi.

Soft Stems - After root rot has set in, stems will usually turn dark green and become mushy or stringy.

Symptoms of Under-watering:

It's important not to confuse the symptoms of over and under-watering. Both cause plant death, but an under-watered plant will have brown, crisp leaves while an over-watered plant's leaves are usually yellow and wilted.