Watering Garden Plants

TO WATER OR NOT TO WATER?
In most areas, rain alone does not meet all the water needs of garden plants. You need to water the garden.

The soil is dry all the way down to the depth of the plant roots. It's time to water.

At least these beds drain well. If the soil were compacted, the water would not drain and the plant roots would drown.

You need to add enough water so that it seeps all the way down to the plant roots. If you just water the soil surface, the roots will grow close to the surface and then the plants will wilt more quickly.

WATERING METHODS

1. A watering can and hose are useful for small gardens.

I'm using a gentle rain nozzle so the water can slowly soak into the soil.

Direct the water to the base of the plant, not on the leaves.

2. Sprinklers are cheap and convenient, but they waste a lot of water to evaporation, especially on hot, windy days.

I'll move the sprinkler around to other spots so all the garden gets enough water.

Plants are most affected by water stress right after they are planted or transplanted, and while fruits are forming. Root crops, such as beets and carrots, are vulnerable to water stress while the roots are growing.

These tomatoes have blossom end rot because they did not get enough water when they were forming.
SAVING WATER IN THE GARDEN
Make the most of available water in the garden.

Collect rain water from roof-tops in rain barrels. Keep the rain barrel covered to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.

Add organic matter to the soil. It holds the water, which then can be used by plants.

Water during early morning. At this time temperatures are cooler and it is less windy, so there is less evaporation.

Cover the soil with mulch, which smothers weeds and allows water to seep slowly into the soil. A mulch cover also reduces evaporation of water from the soil.