

Watering & Establishment Guidelines

You've followed our advice of making thoughtful choices about plants that are suitable for the sunlight, physical space and water availability in your garden. Once home, you placed and planted your new additions in soil you've amended with organic matter such as Black Forest compost and/or Bumper Crop, fertilized with Dr. Earth, applied mulch and watered them in well. Whew! Your work is done, right? NO it is not! You have a commitment to attend to, because while some plants may be 'low maintenance,' there is no such thing as a 'no maintenance' plant. Read on for a post-planting primer about how to help your new plants become established and healthy.

WATERING

"Water regularly until established" is something you'll read on plant tags and hear people say. When is a plant 'established' and how often is 'regularly'? While the answer varies from plant to plant, most trees take 2 to 3 years to put down good roots, while perennials are generally established after 1 or 2 growing seasons (spring and summer). Water is vital. Make sure plants get an inch of water per week, including rain. Periodic deep watering is better than frequent, shallow watering, as that encourages shallow root development. Plants with deep roots are more resilient, so they won't be the first to suffer in a drought. Once established, many trees, shrubs, and perennials will still need supplemental water, particularly during the heat of summer.

In order to establish a realistic routine for watering your garden, refer back to why you chose the plants you did—what do they need to be strong and healthy? Did you choose 'drought tolerant' plants, those that need 'moderate' water or plants that live in consistently moist soil?

Drought tolerant plants are those that are able to withstand periods of time with no supplemental water. Care must be taken during particularly hot spells. If a plant wilts, curls its leaves, turns brown, etc. it needs water— supply it immediately!

When a plant tag or guide refers to 'moderate' water requirements, this means that a routine similar to that which you followed to establish your plants must be followed. Although they will most likely need less water than they did the first growing season or two, moderate water loving plants still require regular water. Remember that periodic *deep* (really make those roots reach for the water you're supplying) watering is better than frequent and shallow.

Plants that thrive in moist soil need just that: water available to the root system at all times. The most efficient way to accommodate such plants is to install an irrigation system that allows for a frequent, deep watering schedule. Irrigation systems can be elaborate and professionally installed, something simple such as a drip hose that you install yourself and combinations thereof. Need help? Come see us!

MULCHING

Not only does mulch give any garden beds a nice, finished look, it is one of your most valuable garden tools. Be it organic, such as bark and aged compost, or inorganic such as rock, mulch helps keep weeds down, prevent moisture loss, shade the soil (keep roots at an even temperature AND starve weed seedlings of sunlight needed to develop), prevent erosion, keep mud down and provide insulation from rapid and/or extreme temperature fluctuations. Using organic mulches has the added bonus of breaking down and adding to the soil composition.



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Planning the amount of mulch needed for your garden beds requires deciding not only what type of mulch you will use, but also how deep of a cover you will apply. Measure the area (multiply length by width) of the bed(s), and then refer below:

<u>To Cover</u>	<u>2" deep</u>	<u>3" deep</u>	<u>4" deep</u>
100 square feet	2/3 cubic yard	1 cubic yard	1 1/3 cubic yards
250 sq. ft.	1 2/3 cu. yd.	2 1/2 cu. yds.	3 1/3 cu. yds.
500 sq. ft.	3 1/3 cu. yds.	5 cu. yds.	6 1/3 cu. yds.
1,000 sq. ft.	6 2/3 cu. yds.	10 cu. yds.	13 1/3 cu. yds.

NOTE: bulk quantities of mulch are sold by the cubic yard (cu. yd.)

FERTILIZING

It is important to plan regular feeding into your garden routine; healthy plants are more resilient to disease and pest problems. By amending your soil with homemade compost, Black Forest compost and/or Bumper Crop, you are adding vital nutrients to the soil. Likewise, when you apply fertilizer to the soil, you are also providing nutrients.

There are many fertilizers to choose from—pick one that will fit the needs of the plants you are feeding (i.e. do you need an all-purpose fertilizer for your perennials, or something specifically for plants that need soil to be acidic?). Dr. Earth fertilizers are formulated for an array of plant needs. Additionally, they are full of microbes, mycorrhizae and naturally-occurring ingredients for the macro and micro nutrients needed by plants in order to thrive. Visit your local Dennis' Seven Dees Garden Center for assistance finding the right fertilizer for your garden needs.

As a general rule, plan to feed established perennials in late winter/early spring to supply them with the nutrients needed for growth in spring and summer. Some heavy-feeding perennials benefit from an additional feeding half-way through the growing season. Newly planted shrubs and trees also benefit from a later winter/early spring supplemental feeding. Mature trees and shrubs may need very little in the way of supplemental nutrients, so take the time to learn what their individual needs are.