



WATER PROBLEMS

Drought

Drought can affect any plant, but young plants, plants grown in sandy soils or containers, and plants grown in hot, windy situations are particularly susceptible. Yellowing of the leaves, burning of the leaf margins, early fall color, leaf drop, wilting, stunted growth and dieback, failure of buds to develop, and small, poor quality fruits are all symptoms of drought.

Drought is far easier to prevent than it is to treat. Remember to check plants for dryness regularly, especially those that are growing in containers. Peat-based soil mixes provide excellent drainage, but they dry out quickly, and they can be difficult to re-wet. When choosing containers for the patio or deck, opt for the larger sizes with more soil volume; these will be much easier to maintain. Remember, too, that hanging baskets will dry out faster than containers on the ground because air circulates around the plant on all sides. In hot summer weather, hanging baskets may need water daily. A good way to tell if container-grown plants need water is to pick them up. Plants that are in need of a drink will be considerably lighter than those that are not. If a container-grown plant is drying out very frequently, it may need transplanting to a larger size pot.

New transplants to the garden also need to be checked for water frequently because their root systems have not yet been established. Remember to water in all new plantings gently but thoroughly. A layer of mulch in the garden will help to keep in moisture.

Water logging

Wilting, frequently followed by yellowing and/or twisting of the leaves and/or leaf drop are all symptoms of too much water. In addition, flower buds may abort or fail to open. On woody plants, the bark might peel off branches. Waterlogged soil leaves plants more susceptible to root rots, and roots of affected plants may turn dark and begin to peel, or they may even rot off completely.

It is much easier to prevent water logging than it is to fix it. When growing plants in containers, use a soil mix that is especially formulated for this purpose. A good soil-less mix will contain sphagnum peat moss and elements such as vermiculite or perlite that will provide structure and air space. Do not use a muck peat or a clay soil.

Remember when watering to do so thoroughly, but infrequently, only when the plant needs it. Check first. The surface of the soil around the plant might feel dry, but there may still be plenty of moisture just below.

In the garden, pay attention to drainage and the structure of the soil. Working in organic matter such as compost and peat moss before planting is very helpful. If drainage cannot be improved, consider using water tolerant plants in the area.

If plants in containers have become water logged, check the drainage holes to see that they are not blocked. Plants with badly rotted roots should be discarded. If the plant looks salvageable, try replanting it in fresh mix and practice good watering techniques. A foliar feed can sometimes help to stimulate growth of new roots.