



REFERENCE:

Protecting the Garden in Hot Weather

PLAN AND PREPARE *BEFORE* THE HEAT.

1. Maintain a year-round calendar of plants for each season and their planting dates. There are many helpful guides available – including some developed by North Haven Gardens – to remind you when plants become available seasonally, when to start plants from seed, and when to get plants into beds and containers. Keep your own list of what plants have worked for you in the past, how they fared throughout the growing season, and what new plants you'd like to try. Knowing in advance what plants you want and when to plant helps guarantee you get the plants you want and is an important first step toward a successful growing season.

2. Harvest and prepare beds and containers for summer planting. Going into any new planting season, it's a good practice clean out beds and refresh the soil. Late spring is the time to harvest the last of cool-season veg like lettuce, onions, and potatoes, and cool-season flowers like pansies, and amend beds with compost. **Earthworm castings, Espoma's Bio-tone Starter Plus or Medina Soil Activator** also give soil an extra advantage. This step is especially important if you're establishing new perennials, shrubs, and trees: it's worth the effort to plant them in correctly-amended soil in order to give them a good start on getting established during the summer.

3. Get tools – especially irrigation supplies – ready for action. Inventory and test garden hoses, soaker hoses, water wands, drip irrigation systems, and in-ground sprinklers and other automatic irrigation systems. Check for leaks and faulty sprinkler heads and monitor the accuracy of timers.

TAKE ACTION ON SUMMER PLANTING.

1. Purchase and install summer herbs, veg, and annual color. Armed with your year-round planting plan, knowing that your pots and gardening beds are ready can bring the fun back to gardening. Once you've purchased plants, get them planted ASAP – no plant benefits from sitting on a patio in a plastic pot. Until you do plant, check carefully for watering – plants in pots dry out faster than those that have already been installed.

2. Stimulate, stimulate. Mulch, mulch, mulch. Long-term investments like perennials, shrubs, and trees should always be planted soaking wet with a **root stimulator** solution then reapply by watering slowly and deeply with once a month for several months to promote root establishment and temperature tolerance. As temperatures rise, most plants go into dormancy and cease to grow, and that includes the roots. **Root stimulator** is a low-cost option to give any plant an edge on getting established. Mulching with a 2"-3" layer of **hardwood mulch, pine straw/bark** for acid-loving plants will help block out weeds, hold moisture in, and regulate soil temperatures.

EVALUATE WATERING NEEDS.

1. Know your plants. While all plants require some moisture, water needs vary widely: succulents, for example, need very little water, prolific bloomers tend to be thirsty, and shade loving plants like ferns benefit from humidity. When planning your garden, try to group plants with similar irrigation requirements in close proximity.

2. Know your pots & landscape beds. In the same way that different plants have different watering needs, containers and various parts of the yard will require specialized attention. Plants in containers (and remember: *all* such plants benefit from a pot with a drainage hole) will dry out faster than those in the ground, and areas in full sun or exposed to the wind will dry out faster, too. Adjust your watering plan accordingly.

INSTITUTE A WATERING PLAN.

1. When you understand each plant's water requirements, you can make a plan that makes watering easy on you. Remember the golden rule of watering: *for most plants* (excluding drought-tolerant species like yuccas, succulents, and desert willows), *water less often, but slowly and deeply*. Utilizing soaker hoses, bubblers, and drip irrigation – which can even be hooked up to containers – greatly reduces the time you spend watering, especially when they are paired with a timer. An inexpensive **moisture meter** is also a solid investment and can take the guesswork out of when to water. There's a corollary to the golden rule, however: new plantings of perennials, shrubs, and trees require supplemental hand watering. Larger plants like trees may need supplemental water for as much as two years. Watering is best accomplished in the early morning hours.

2. Watering lawns requires a different set of rules from watering landscape and flowering plans. Turfgrass lawns tend to have shallow root systems and thus don't need deep water; most homeowners rely on in-ground sprinkler systems or moveable oscillating sprinklers. One simple way to monitor how much water your lawn gets is to set a tuna fish can in the area that's being watered and see how much water collects in one water cycle, then adjust watering cycles accordingly. One of the most common – and costliest – mistakes when watering is to assume that lawn sprinklers are sufficient to water perennials, shrubs, trees, and new plantings.

PROTECT FROM SCORCH.

1. Shade. Shade cloth, draped or suspended over more sensitive plants in full sun, can help protect sensitive foliage and ripening fruit like summer tomatoes.

2. Shift. As summer comes on, plants in containers can often be re-situated to a covered patio or under the shade of a tree. Morning sun and afternoon filtered light can protect plants from going into heat-related dormancy and keep them blooming and looking great.

3. Continue to nourish and mulch. With the exception of summer edibles, summer is NOT the time to fertilize; plants are challenged enough in the summer without encouraging new growth. However, products like **Root Stimulator**, **Garrett Juice**, or **liquid seaweed** will nurture plants through summer and promote temperature tolerance. As your mulch slowly breaks down, replenish and maintain that 2"-3" layer throughout the season to help retain moisture and control soil temperatures.

REVIVE THE GARDEN AND HELP IT THRIVE.

1. Evaluate, refresh and feed. Once that happy time arrives when temperatures begin to fall and rain returns to the forecast, evaluate, on a case-by-case basis, how the landscape has fared. Pick-prune to cut away dead wood and lightly shape plants up, and keep fall flowering perennials like autumn sage dead-headed to promote re-blooming. Using your planting calendar, begin to source cool-season color like pansies and ornamental cabbage and fall cole crops like broccoli and cauliflower, then refresh the soil in garden beds and pots and plant for fall. This is also the time for fall fertilization. Take advantage of fall precipitation to water fertilizer in.

See a Garden Advisor for additional help in protecting your garden.

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