

DROUGHT TOLERANT PLANTS



Drought tolerant plants need little or no watering and are Californian's best bet for saving water in outdoor gardening. In order for newly planted plants to become water-sensible, they first must send their roots down to the soil level where winter rains help them retain moisture well into the dry season. This can be done by watering the plants at planting time and again during the first winter or spring if the rains are too sparse to soak the soil.

The following are fundamental considerations in maintaining drought-tolerant plants:

◆ **Watering** - Water slowly, deeply, and thoroughly two to four times during the plants' first dry season. By the second summer, some of these plants will need infrequent watering while many plants will need no water at all. Water plants only when needed. Water at night when evaporation is lower and air is usually calmer. Avoid runoff and over spray, which wastes water. Where possible, use permeable paving, such as decomposed granite or flagstones, with spaces between so that rainwater can seep through to the soil below where it is more available to plant roots.

◆ **Soil/Mulch** - By routinely cultivating your soil with the incorporation of organic matter such as compost, the soil's ability to retain moisture and resist evaporation will improve. Another way to help retain moisture is to apply a layer of organic matter over the soil around plants. A 2-to-4-inch layer spread beneath the canopy of a plant is ideal.

◆ **Irrigate Efficiently** - Using a soil sampling tube can help you find out how deeply you are wetting the soil or whether it is time to water. Push it into the ground then twist it back out and you will have a 10-inch or longer core that shows how wet the soil is in the ground. If the core is moist only 2 inches deep and roots could easily go down 6 to 12 inches, you need to water longer.

◆ **Group Plants Wisely** - Place plants with the same water needs together. This allows you to water more efficiently. It also makes the best use of automated irrigation systems.

◆ **Control Weeds** - These notorious garden intruders steal water from the plants. Regularly hoe or pull out weeds.

◆ **Where to Buy Water-Sensible Plants** - Retail nurseries sell quite a few drought-tolerant plants, many of them California natives. Another type of drought-tolerant plant is succulents, which generally adapt well to drought conditions.

For more information about drought-tolerant plants for a water-sensible area in gardening, please contact the District's Consumer Service Department at (909) 595-7554.

USE WATER WISELY!

