

Cool Tips to Beat the Heat

IMPORTANT NOTE: Do not treat plants and lawns with chemicals in temperatures above 85 degrees F! Best to apply in late afternoon when foliage is not directly exposed to the sun. Water plants and lawns the day before application of chemicals. When applying fertilizers, water in well after application.

The heat is on! Summer is here and for South Carolina, June and July are hot times in the garden. The good news is that there are ways to help plants thrive despite these seasonal challenges. Adjusting your landscape care accordingly during these summer months not only provides relief for lawns and gardens but also for you, the gardener. Try these following tips!

Lawns

Unfortunately, some of us may have no control of when we can water; especially if you are using municipal water with peak residential usage times. Just try to do the best with what you have!

When daytime temperatures remain above 90 degrees for many consecutive days, you should give your lawn 1 to 1 1/2" of water 2-3 times a week.

During the summer, the best time to start watering is in the early morning. By doing so, you allow water to soak into the soil and roots before the sun shines down and evaporation begins. This also helps prevent the spread of fungal diseases. The combination of heat and high humidity is an open invitation for fungus and disease.

Treat affected lawns with Fertilome® F-Stop

A granular product containing Eagle® fungicide that provides a systemic protectant and curative fungicide. Controls turfgrass diseases in established lawns and ornamental turfs. One application lasts up to 4 weeks. Lightly irrigate treated areas after soon after applying. *Ask us where to find F-Stop in our garden pharmacy!*

If we have a good rain, be sure to count that as a watering day for your lawn. In extreme heat, irrigation becomes a balancing act of too little or too much. Both can lead to potential lawn damage.

Closely monitor your lawn during the summer for signs of water deficiency. Be sure to use a rain gauge to help track the amount of water your lawn is receiving 1 to 1 1/2" of water per week from Mother nature and/or irrigation.

Mow lawns high. Taller grass produces deeper roots that are more drought-tolerant. A deeply rooted lawn is also more resistant to insects, disease and other environmental stresses.

Keep mower blades sharp so that the mower is cutting and not tearing your grass. This reduces the amount of stress it will already receive from scorching temps. Mulching mowers help by using the clippings to maintain moisture levels.

Aerate! Aeration allows air and water to penetrate your lawn. The more air and water that reach the roots, the happier your lawn will be!

Signs That Your Lawn Needs Water

The Color Test—When water is not available for long periods of time, your grass will exhibit a bluish-gray cast.

Foot Printing—If walking across your lawn in the later afternoon leaves footprints, this is caused by the grass's inability to spring back up due to lack of water in its cells. If footprints remain for a long time, the lawn should be watered to prevent grass from going dormant.

Leaf Check—Do the blades of grass in your lawn appear wilted, rolled or folded during dry periods? These are signs that your lawn needs to be watered to prevent grass from going dormant.

Screwdriver Test—Try to press a screwdriver into the ground of your lawn after a prolonged dry period. If it is very difficult to push it into the soil and a sample taken from the root zone is dry, the soil indicates the need for watering. There are other factors that will cause a lawn to show symptoms of drought stress: prolonged periods of high temperatures, strong wind and low relative humidity. During these conditions, lawns may wilt although there is water in the soil. This is because the leaves lose moisture faster than the root systems can absorb it.

Plants

Water plants thoroughly to promote drought and pest-resistant roots. Consistency is the key. Properly irrigate your trees and shrubs. For more established plants, they may not require as much watering attention. For newly-established plants, you may have to manually water.

Avoid light, frequent watering which encourages shallow roots. Shallow roots are less able to tolerate drought and more susceptible to disease and insect problems.

Spread a 2-3-inch layer of pine straw or shredded mulch over the soil in garden beds and around trees and shrubs. Mulching conserves moisture, keeps roots cool and moist, and suppresses weeds. *Do not pile around trunk of plants—they need room to breathe.*

Remove weeds from garden beds and borders as soon as they appear. These "plants out of place" steal water and nutrients from your desirable garden plants. Plus, they can harbor insects and diseases that are harmful to your garden plants.



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