

Watering your plants in dry spells

Hopefully by now we are all aware there is a hosepipe ban in force, meaning any watering in the garden has to be done by hand using a watering can. This makes it all the more important to understand HOW to water plants. Nobody really teaches us this, do they?



Salvia microphylla

Yes, it is time-consuming watering plants manually during dry spells. But it is even more essential in these times that plants should be “deep watered”, enabling the water to penetrate to their roots in order to keep them alive and well. Wafting water over the foliage of a plant may make you feel virtuous, but does nothing for the plants!



Cistus 'Silver Pink'

Plants that have been in the garden for a year or more have generally developed a good root system. Unless they have rigid leaves – such as hollies – it is then fairly easy to restrict watering until the plant begins to show signs of stress, such as flaccid and drooping leaves, or a “stretched” appearance. As a guideline, shrubs around a metre high should be given a full-sized watering can of water (8 litres), sometimes two, at each session. Young trees may need several full cans. Give half a can to each needy herbaceous plant. You won't need to water more than once or twice a week if you do it properly. “Little and often” is not the best use of this valuable resource, since in dry conditions water can run off without noticeably penetrating the soil. If you review the plants you've watered after an hour they should have noticeably revived. This is a useful exercise in any case, as it can help to give you a feel for their appearance when they are in need of water again.



Perovskia atriplicifolia 'Blue Spire'

Recently planted specimens, however, have not had time to reach out beyond the former confines of the pot. It is important to get the water right into their base. They only need a small amount each time, but may need watering every couple of days.



Delosperma cooperi

To freshen your garden with new purchases consider drought resistant plants such as Salvias, Sedums, Cistus and Helichrysum. Try the Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*), or even the South African ‘*Delosperma*’ forms with flowers that blaze like neon.



You can look up plants in the Joy of Plants iPhone app, available from the App Store, or in the Plant Finder on the Hare Hatch Sheeplands website www.harehatchsheeplands.co.uk.



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