

## Prepare Your Plants for Summer Watering

You don't have to invest a lot of money to make your landscape more drought-resistant. Just changing how you water can often help.

University of Georgia experts say knowing how to water and helping your plants hold moisture are essential pieces to the puzzle.

Reducing the amount of water you give landscape plants during the spring will reduce their reliance on extra watering in the summer.

By weaning your plants off extra water in the spring, you'll encourage their root systems to grow deeper. The more you baby plants with water, the shallower their roots will grow and the more water they'll demand during dry times.

Mulch is one of the best landscaping investments you can make. Old newspapers make excellent mulch around ornamental shrubs and flowers.

To place newspaper mulch, first use a leaf rake to gently pull back the existing mulch. Next, dip the newspaper in a bucket of water and spread it two sheets thick over the ground. Then reposition the mulch back to hide the newspaper and hold it in place.

Newspaper not only helps hold moisture. It adds organic matter to the soil as it decomposes. It's easier to spread the moistened newspaper before installing new plants. Just make holes in the newspaper and plant through them.

Hand watering with a garden hose and targeting plants that need water is a more efficient way to water. Lawn sprinkler water some plants that don't need it.

When watering by hand, use a water breaker to apply water slowly at a rate the soil can absorb. This may require you to make several passes over an area.

Put saucers under patio plants to collect excess water. As the soil in the pot dries out, it will wick up the excess water from the saucer as needed.

When planting container plants, use strips of old T-shirts, flannel sheets or other cotton fabric as wicks. Extend them from the saucer through the drainage holes in the bottom of

the pot and into the soil media. The fabric will act like a wick in an oil lamp and pull water into the soil media as needed.

Wire baskets lined with coconut fiber or sphagnum moss tend to dry out quickly. Line the inside with a plastic bag to reduce moisture loss through the container sides. Don't forget to provide drainage holes so the pots don't get waterlogged.

Source:

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