

Growing Vegetables When Water is Scarce

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Hot dry summers can present as much of a challenge for Maritime Northwest gardeners as long cool springs. In this class we will:

- Explore of growing vegetables during drought-like summers.
- Learn about simple techniques for conserving water, delivering water to plants and enriching the soil so it retains moisture longer.
- Explore vegetable varieties that are better suited to hot weather and
- Discover other practices for successful growing.

Plants that like hot weather

All of these will need some water. Annual crops will need weekly water through the season but will hold up under hot weather. In very hot, dry years the perennial herbs will need some water.

Right Plant, Right Place

Right Plant, Right Time

Wait to plant new perennials, shrubs and trees until fall or early next spring.

Avoid cool season crops such as brassicas, lettuce, spinach, cilantro

Heat-loving vs long-season

Typical summer annual vegetables and flowers such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, beans, potatoes, basil, carrots, corn, beets, squash, zinnias, sunflowers

Hardy perennial herbs such as rosemary, sage, thyme, chives, parsley, salsify

Build Healthy Soil

Have a stash of compost to use as a top dressing during the summer

Mulch. Add 2-3 inches of woodchip mulch around perennials, shrubs, trees and plants that are typically drought-tolerant.

Fertilize with liquid or slow-release organic fertilizer

Watering

Water, water, water – be consistent about how often and how much

It takes time and it is a wet, dirty job

Water deeply and less frequently

Give most plants the right amount of water -- 1-2 gallons of water per week per plant

Water in morning or evening.

Morning watering will heat up soil, evening watering will cool things down

Water the soil not the plant

Watering Tools

Best tools for the job – few moving parts, parts are replaceable

Don't buy based on color, price or promise of ease.

Essential water tools

brass ball valve, water breaker, sprinkler, lead-free hose, drip lines, drip irrigation main assemble, manual and automatic timers and watering cans

Watering Systems

Set up simple drip lines or homemade drip jugs

Complicated automated systems

Watering my hand with hose or watering can

Hybrid systems

Resources

Maritime Northwest Garden Guide, 2nd edition, Lisa Taylor, 2014

Your Farm in the City, Lisa Taylor and the Gardeners of Seattle Tilth, 2011

Cool Season Gardener, Bill Thorness, 2013

Winter Gardening in the Maritime Northwest, Binda Colebrook, 2012

Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades, Steve Solomon, 2000

Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest, Russell Link, 2004