

Establishing Plants to Withstand Summer's Dry Season

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Step 1 – Understand Your Garden's *Non-Living Matter* (Sand / Silt / Clay)

- a.k.a. “soil texture” or “soil type”... indicator of the soil’s natural drainage rate
- Formed over millennia; you cannot change it

Methods:

- “soil shake jar test” (online videos)
- “ribbon test” (online videos)

Step 2 – Improve Your Soil's Structure (*Living Matter*) ... timing matters

- Improves water holding capacity *and* drainage
- Releases nutrients for plants
- Easier for roots to grow into

Method ...

- If no roots are present –
 - TIMING: *when the soil is moist but not soggy*
 - dig in 2 to 4 inches of compost throughout the soil to a depth of 6 to 10 inches, and then cover entire soil with mulch
- If the area already has roots growing there –
 - TIMING: *before the summer's dry season when the soil is moist*
 - simply cover the soil with **mulch**...

Planting Area	Mulch to Use (depth matters)	
shrubs, trees	Woodchips* (3 to 4")	Leaves (2 to 3")
ferns, perennials, bulbs	Leaves (2 to 3")	Coarse compost (1 to 2")
vegetables	Straw (1 to 1.5")	Coarse compost (1 to 1.5")

*Woodchips – sign up to receive an entire load FREE: www.chipdrop.com

Step 3 – Choose Plants that THRIVE in Your Soil and are drought tolerant once established

The Plant List..... www.savingwater.org, Lawn & Garden
King County Native Plant Guide www.kingcounty.gov, Native Plant Guide
Bellevue Botanical Garden www.bellevuebotanical.org, Collections Search
Great Plant Picks www.greatplantpicks.org, Plant Lists

Step 4 –Plant Right ... waiting until fall rains begin

Method:

1. Find the root flare ... and keep it exposed above ground
2. Tussle the roots
3. Use your native soil
4. Apply mulch (keep it 1 to 2” from plant’s stem)
5. Water deeply

Step 5– Practice Smart Watering

Methods:

- Water Deeply, and less frequently
 - 1” of water per week ... vegetables, lawns (to stay green)
 - 1” of water per month ... “golden” lawns (dormant)
- Make every drop count
 - Soaker hose
 - Drip system
 - Quick-disconnect couplers
 - Straight-sided cans to measure water depth
 - Irrigation audit

Resources – local & reliable

Garden Hotlinehelp@gardenhotline.org, (206) 633-0224, www.gardenhotline.org
Tilth Alliance (edible gardening)..... www.tilthalliance.org
Find an ecoPRO Sustainable Landscape Professional www.ecoprocertified.org
Cascade Water Alliance www.cascadewater.org

Books for Gardening West of the Cascades

Grow Your Own Native Landscape, [Washington State University Extension Publications, MISC0273](#)
Maritime Northwest Garden Guide, Seattle Tilth (edible gardening)
Pacific Northwest Month-by-Month Gardening, Christina Pfeiffer