

The Garden Corner

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The National Weather Service has recently given their 3-month outlook for temperatures for July through September and, if they're right, we're in for "above average" during that time. As we steadily march toward fall, most of us are going to be spending a lot of time watering our gardens in an effort to promote crop production and flowers blooming. Here are a few tips to keep your place looking good and to help reduce the cost of your water bill.

There is a general rule of thumb of one inch of water per week to maintain optimal growth conditions. Forget about that "rule of thumb"! When the temperatures hit 90 and above, an inch a week is not near enough. Just as an example, let's talk container gardening for a moment. Your watering requirements are going to depend upon several things: (1) What kind of plants you have, (2) The type of soil you're using, and (3) Where the container is located. If you have succulents like sedum, you will not have to water very often because these types of plants tend not to need much water and many are drought tolerant. On the other hand, if you're growing annuals like zinnias, marigolds, cosmos, or salvia; you're going to water a lot more. The same would be true for tomatoes grown in a container. For tomatoes to do well, there needs to be a consistent source of water or you risk developing blossom end rot or your fruit will crack. Next you need to consider the type of soil in your container. If it's a sandy or loamy type, the water will drain away quickly not giving the plants time to take the needed moisture and put it to work. If the soil is more of a clay type mixture, the water will remain longer and be available to the plant material. Another important consideration is the location of the container. One placed in a shaded spot would require less watering than one placed in a full sun exposure. On really hot and windy days, the moisture in the soil will escape in an instant so you will want to check the sun exposed container often to insure the soil is moist.

When it comes to generally watering your flower beds, vegetable garden, and lawn there are two very critical notions to keep in mind: (1) Water deeply – the deeper you water – the deeper the roots. When you're done watering check to insure the soil is moist to at least 4 to 6 inches down. And number (2) always water in the morning so the plants can dry out before evening. Allowing foliage to remain wet overnight causes all sorts of problems like mildew, mold, and all kinds of diseases.

For your specific questions and/or comments you can always write to: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email: maandpak@embarqmail.com and I'll get right back with you. Until next month, take it easy out there and drink plenty of water.