

How's Your Garden Handling the Hot Hot Heat?

Normally I like to write these columns from my garden. Take the laptop out, commune with nature, and type away. Not today. It's hot and I'm in front of the little window air conditioner that could. Yesterday as the temperatures reached into the hundreds, I said out loud to my garden, "Good luck!" and shut the door.

That's not completely true. I'm doing some deep late-night watering. And a bit of mid-day misting. I'm not keen on the looks of my impatiens. They're like drag queens in full make-up, layers, heels and pantyhose outside on a wickedly hot day-rough.

But enough about me, let's talk about tools to beat the heat in your garden. I don't put it past hardcore gardeners to set up shade umbrellas over precious plants. You may scoff, but I've seen it done with roses. You don't have to go to those extremes, but there are some basic things you can do to help your garden get through our hot, dry summers.

- **Mulch the soil with compost.** This helps lock in the water, helps keep weeds down, and remember: weeds compete with plants for water and nutrients.

- **Water early in the morning, focusing water at the base of plants, not so much an overhead spray.** Watering in the morning allows the plants to soak up the moisture longer while the day begins to heat up. I water at night because it's easier



THE SASSY GARDENER

by LeAnn Locher

for my schedule, and that's fine too. Just don't waste your efforts by watering in the middle of the day.

- **It's better to water deep and less frequently than daily drips and drabs.** Deep watering encourages roots to go deep, making for stronger, healthier plants.

- **Install drip irrigation:** it's better for your water bill, keeps you from having to be tied to a hose in hot weather, and only waters exactly the area that needs it.

- **Soaker hoses send water deep.** They're easy and you can walk away while they do their thing.

- **New fruit trees? They need more water than you think.** Oregon State University recommends 3-5 gallons of water per tree every week, and double that during hot weather.

- **Plants in pots bear the brunt of hot weather the most.** Once they dry out, they never really hold water the same. Bigger pots dry out slower than little ones. If you're



Plants in pots bear the brunt of hot weather the most. Once they dry out, they never really hold water the same. Bigger pots dry out slower than little ones. If you're going to be gone over a weekend or longer, consider investing \$8.99 in a kiddie pool and putting all of your pots in it along with a few inches of water.

If our recent heat has you rethinking or planning for a garden that's tougher, here are a few ideas.

- **Right plant, right place.** The saying isn't overused, it's true. A partial shade plant in a full sun location may be okay nine months of the year, but during our three months of warm, dry weather, it's going to stress out. And stressed-out plants grow weaker, inviting disease and pests.

- **Plant closely and tightly together.** This cuts down on weeds and shades the ground around the plants' roots.

- **Consider plants native to the Northwest,** and in groupings that support natives. Native plants don't need you as much: hello, low maintenance! **JO**

going to be gone over a weekend or longer, consider investing \$8.99 in a kiddie pool and putting all of your pots in it along with a few inches of water. The plants can have a good soak while you're off having fun.

LEANN LOCHER is gardening (and watering) this summer while completing her OSU Extension Master Gardener hours. She loves to hear from other gardeners and can be reached at sassygardener@gmail.com.

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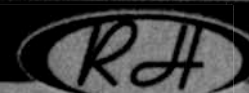
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