

general plant care

This guide is intended to provide you with generally accepted practices and expectations for your recently acquired plant materials. For further information, please contact our garden center, local library, internet, or the University of Wisconsin Extension office at 1-866-535-4389.

Watering

Watering new plant material helps ease transplant shock, replaces water lost in the soil surrounding the roots, prompts new growth, and settles the soil.

You have to use your best judgment when watering. A plant can die just as easily when it is over watered. The soil must be checked to assure that the plant is receiving adequate amounts of water needed. Feel the soil 4-6" deep near the plant. The soil should be moist but not soggy for a long period of time. It is important to check what is happening below the surface because the appearance of the mulch is not an indication of the moisture content in the soil.

The best time to water any plant materials is early in the morning before the mid-day heat sets in. Plants need approximately 1 inch of water per week from rain or the garden hose. They must be watered thoroughly before the ground permanently freezes. This is especially important for evergreens, boxwoods, and rhododendrons. Water again thoroughly in the spring when the ground thaws to rejuvenate the plant. Most plants, especially perennials, will do better if you don't apply water directly to foliage. Water should be directed towards the root ball of the plant.

For bare root stock, soak the roots overnight, and keep the plant out of the sun and wind until planting. Then water the plant in thoroughly and give it extra protection if a deep freeze is to occur. Avoid over watering but don't let the roots dry out.

Weeds

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All planting beds are susceptible to weed growth. One can prevent weeds from germinating by using a preemergent herbicide, such as Preen. However, it will not prevent perennial weeds (those returning year after year). You need to apply the product early in spring before the weed seeds germinate. It may be necessary to reapply the product throughout the growing season.

To eliminate existing weeds, use a weed killer, such as Round Up. Read instructions carefully and watch where you spray! This product kills anything green.

Fertilization

Plants need care and attention if they are to flourish. Giving them regular feed will ensure strong growth as well as abundant flower and fruit production. Fertilizer requirements will vary depending on plant type. In an established garden you can apply fertilizer in granular form as a dressing around the plants early in the growing season. There are many fertilizers on the market; we recommend a slow release form such as Osmocote. Read the directions carefully as too much fertilizer will damage the roots of a plant.