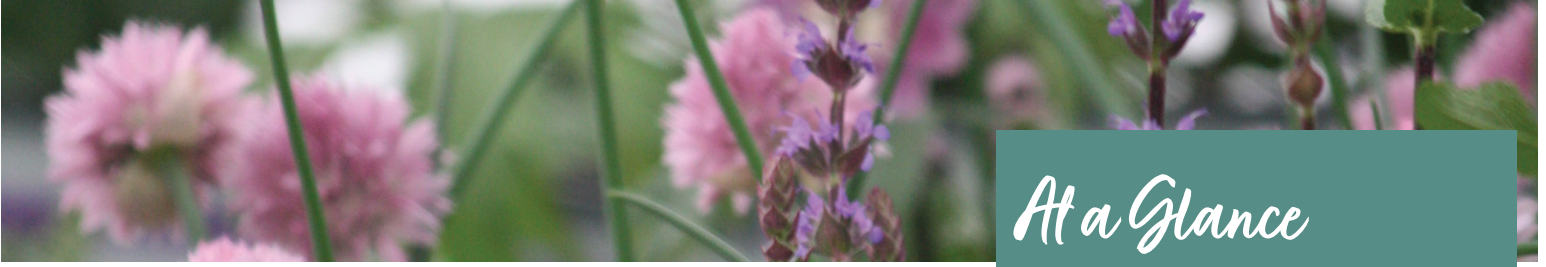


Watering Perennials

How to keep your perennials happy with just the right amount of water



At a Glance

Water newly-planted perennials by thoroughly soaking the entire root area when soil has dried down to a depth of 2-3".

Water established perennials similarly to newly-planted ones, but less often; check soil for moisture with your finger before watering, and check more often in hot, dry weather.

Perennial grasses should be watered thoroughly every day when newly-planted, especially if weather is warm. Once established, continue to check for moisture regularly.

During the winter, when temperatures are 45° F or above and precipitation is scarce, give plants a thorough soaking at the soil level.

Watering Newly-Planted Perennials

After planting, water perennials with a hose on a slow stream until you're confident that the entire root ball has been thoroughly saturated. Check the soil for moisture every day, feeling with your finger down to a depth of 2-3 inches. If the root area is moist, don't water. If it's dry, water until thoroughly soaked. Watering by hand is recommended during this time, as a sprinkler system may not always cover the entire root ball.

Watering frequency will vary depending on temperature and precipitation. Keep in mind that in Colorado, weather can change drastically in a short period of time.

It can take anywhere from 3 weeks to a whole season for perennials to become established. Careful and thorough watering the entire first summer is recommended.

Watering Established Perennials

Well-established perennials should be watered in much the same way as newly-planted ones. Each time you water, ensure that the entire root area is thoroughly saturated. You won't need to water with as much frequency as with newly-planted perennials. However, even established perennials will need to be watered about 2-3 times per week during hot summer months.

Xeric or drought tolerant perennials may only need water once every week to 10 days; water with higher frequency in times of especially hot, dry weather.

If you're using a sprinkler system to water your perennial beds, set a timer so that water is applied for 10-15 minutes on and 15 minutes off to allow water to soak into the soil; water again for 10-15 minutes. This allows for efficient water usage and minimizes runoff. This method will also reduce the frequency of watering.

Our Perennial Department can direct you to perennials that are more drought tolerant. We also have signs that indicate perennials that require more water, and those that need less. For example: As a general rule, shade perennials prefer regular, thorough water.

Watering Perennial Grasses

Grasses need special treatment when first planted and throughout the first summer. Most will need to be watered deeply and thoroughly every day after planting, especially if the weather is very warm. If planting in May and weather is cool, check the soil for moisture before watering. After 3-4 weeks, begin watering every 2-3 days, but continue to soak the entire root ball each time.

Regular deep applications of water should continue for the entire summer and fall during the plant's first year, even for drought tolerant grasses. In subsequent summers, you'll be able to water less often, because the grass will be well established.

Winter Watering

Even when the above-ground foliage has entered dormancy, the roots continue to seek moisture for the long haul. In Colorado, we often have extended periods without any moisture, which makes watering perennials during the winter crucial. If there hasn't been any rain or snow for 3-4 weeks, and temperatures are on the warm side, or it's been windy, you'll need to water. On days when the temperature is above 45° F, apply a gentle stream of water to the root area of each perennial, or use a small sprinkler to water the bed. This is best done during the warmest part of the day to allow the water to soak in before nightfall, when temperatures drop.