



# Digging It!

July, 2014

## Conserving Water in our Gardens



With the extremes of climate change, precipitation patterns have become less predictable and summers are often hotter and drier. Most gardeners are now finding their lawns and gardens parched during the summer months. For country-dwellers, are finding their wells drained and for those in the city, watering lawns and gardens can become extremely expensive. The time has come to change the way we garden.

Maintaining a lush green lawn throughout the summer is a thing of the past. Fortunately, grass is very resilient and even without water for a few weeks, it will go into a dormant state and revive when water is available again. Help your lawn survive drought:

- mow your lawn less often –at 3-4 inches in length
- set your mower high so you're only cutting off the top 1/3
- leave the clippings for mulch
- don't over-fertilize
- reduce turf you by planting native plants in place of lawn
- use drought-resistant grasses

To conserve water in your flower gardens use native plants which are used to surviving in this climate. Replace your water-loving herbaceous perennials. Generally, plants that have small, thick, glossy, fuzzy or silver grey leaves tend to be more drought tolerant. Some other plants that do well with limited water are: pansies, lavender, rosemary, black-eyed Susans, cornflowers, yuccas, verbena, baby's breath, lilacs and evergreen shrubs.



To reduce the amount of supplemental water you apply to your garden, some other things you can do are:

- mulch around plants - should be several inches thick - press the mulch down around the drip line of plants to form a depression and prevent run-off
- remove weeds
- group plants by water requirements
- add organic matter to your soil to increase water retention
- plant gardens on level ground to prevent run-off
- in very dry or hilly areas, try a scree/gravel garden

A good idea to reduce the amount of watering we do is to use a rain gauge. That way, you know how much water nature has provided and only supplement when absolutely necessary. If you must water, here are some tips to reduce what you use:

- use a soaker hose, drip irrigation or a sprinkler wand and apply water at the root level
- water before 9 a.m. to prevent evaporation which is a major cause of water loss through evaporation
- use a rain barrel
- use low water pressure in the hose to prevent run-off
- water longer but less often
- for shrubs, water the root zone only, ie 1-3 times the width
- for perennials, water the width of the canopy



As conscientious and innovative gardeners, we can still have beautiful gardens without wasting one of our most precious commodities – water.

*Val Gillespie, MGIT, Simcoe County*

## July TO DO List

- Deadhead annuals for repeated blooming
- Establish good watering practices: once per week during early morning or early evening and water deeply.
- Top up water gardens regularly
- Thin vegetable crops to encourage better harvest.
- Train climbing vines to their supports
- Continue to stake plants as they grow
- Weed regularly to keep beds neat and tidy

Turn compost and add to garden when ready. If you do not have compost use

## Tip of the Month:

We have it on good authority that you can destroy Lily Beetles with a Rhubarb Tonic. Chop leaves and place in a tub that you will not reuse. Pour boiling water on top (approx. 1 large leaf to 1 litre). Stand back as the fumes may be dangerous to humans as well as beetles! Leave overnight and pour around your lilies in the morning. Some members have already had success!

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Newsletter of the Simcoe County Ask a Master Gardener books containing answers to your most common gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for only \$10 or Gardening Guides for only \$1. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend!

Master Gardeners

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## Master Gardeners of Simcoe County

### Where to find us for free gardening advice!

#### Simcoe County Master Gardener Meeting,

White Pine Board Room, Midhurst, 7:00 pm, September 16, 2014

#### MG Question and Answers

Saturdays and Sundays  
Saturdays and Sundays

Canadian Tire Centre Collingwood  
Botanix, Alliston

#### A Present for the Grand Kids?

This week I picked up a Bug Vacuum from Toys r' Us . The kids can catch the bugs for you and you can look them up in our article! How cool is that?

**"Life Begins the day one plants a garden" Debra Rabbitts**

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For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Tracy Bosley at 705-435-2608 or email her at [tvbosley@rogers.com](mailto:tvbosley@rogers.com). For more information on Master Gardeners visit [mgoi.ca](http://mgoi.ca)