

Water is essential for plant survival

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I might be taking a risk writing about this topic; but I am willing to take that risk. You see, every time I write about how dry it is or about the fact that you need to water your plants, it's rained before being published.

So go ahead Mother Nature, rain rain rain. I don't care if this column is worthless or redundant or not necessary. Please, rain.

Our area is in the midst of a moderate drought. I am learning from colleagues that parts of the Midwest are in the same situation and others (like northern Kentucky close to Marietta) are really just fine with soil moisture.

We are in a position, that without rain, we could experience plant damage.

I don't tend to water everything in my landscape, just the priority plants. And right now, the priorities for watering are the vegetable garden and my newly planted trees and shrubs as well as recently planted perennials.

Of course, my container plants are getting watered on a regular basis so I don't include these in the category of "must have water now or else."

Newly-planted landscape plants have not developed adequate root systems to withstand prolonged dry periods. This applies to plants that were put in the ground sometime in the last three to five years.

Perennials are typically shallow-rooted in their early years and need to have additional irrigation during dry spells. Water these.

I don't usually water my established perennial beds in the summer unless they get to this point.

The same thing applies to my annual flowers. Once they are established, I don't water them unless they are not going to make it without supplemental irrigation.

In the vegetable garden, I mentioned in a column earlier this year about how critical it is to water these plants when the vegetables are beginning to form.

If you want those wonderful thick-walled bell peppers, water is essential.

When you water, do it the right way to get the most out of it. Soak the plants, don't just turn the sprinkler on for an hour and walk away.

Either use a rain gauge to determine the amount of water delivered to the plants or get your hands dirty and actually dig down and check the soil.

My rule of thumb is to water thoroughly less often. Therefore, I really soak the root of the plants and don't have to do it again for a little while.

For instance, I sometimes leave the sprinkler on the perennials for at least four hours.

Of course, soaker hoses are even better to deliver the water right to the plant roots, but if you don't have them, overhead sprinklers are better than nothing.

I truly hope that as you are reading this you are thinking that I am crazy and what was I thinking about when I came up with this topic!!!!