



"Your Outdoor Source"

2442 State Route 27 – North Brunswick, NJ 08902 – (732) 297-1244 – Open Seven Days

Summer Gardening Tips

WATER WISE TIPS

Whether it will be a droughty summer or not, lawns and gardens almost always require some supplemental watering. However, there are a few things gardeners can do to reduce the frequency of watering and amount of water needed.

- **Use drought-tolerant plants.**

Many annuals, perennials, ornamental grasses, and shrubs do well with little watering. Check with your local garden centers or Extension service for lists of these plants.

- **Reduce or eliminate use of chemical fertilizers.**

These promote lush growth, which requires more water to support. Instead, use compost and mycorrhizae. Compost adds nutrients very gradually and improves the soil's ability to hold water. Mycorrhizae are tiny, beneficial microorganisms that actually help plants take up water and nutrients. These are available from garden centers and mail-order companies in liquid or powder form.

- **Apply plenty of mulch.**

Don't allow it to touch tree trunks or plant stems, but apply it deeply—up to six inches—in the blank spaces between plants, where the sun would otherwise hit the ground and dry it out. Around trees, angle the slope of the mulch so that water runs toward the tree.

- **Install a drip irrigation system or soaker hoses.**

Because drip irrigation systems and soaker hoses deliver water directly to the root zone, they will do more good and use far less water than sprinklers. If you do use sprinklers, consider installing a timer to minimize waste.

- **Lose the lawn.**

Consider converting some of the lawn to garden beds or plant a drought tolerant native turf grass or groundcover that is not dependent upon weekly (or even more frequent) irrigation. In the West, buffalo grass is a good replacement for conventional turf lawns.





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ORNAMENTAL GRASSES FOR FOUR SEASON INTEREST

Ornamental grasses are tough, low-maintenance plants that provide four seasons of interest in the garden. These grasses emerge in late spring, at which time they are very effective in camouflaging the foliage of spent daffodils and other bulbs. They look full and lush all summer long. Most ornamental grasses are late bloomers, some waiting until October to produce their unique spiky flowers. After they have been hit by frost, their green foliage turns lovely, tawny shades that contrast with the reds of turning leaves and the deep greens of evergreens.

One of the few maintenance chores with ornamental grasses is a yearly shearing back of the dried foliage in early spring. Beyond that, these plants require little care and most are pest and disease free. Just be sure to site them in a sunny spot because most require at least six hours of sunshine.

Some good grasses to try are:

- Big bluestem (*Adropogon gerardii*)
- Fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*)
- Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)
- Switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*)
- Feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora*)
- River oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

COLORFUL CONTAINERS OF ANNUALS

When you combine annuals in a container, it intensifies their effect. A container also allows you to dress up places where plants don't grow such as patios and balconies. Whether you have a sunny or shady spot, there are annuals to help add sparkle.

For shady places in your garden, choose annuals that prefer to be cool and shady. Among these are coleus, fuchsia, impatiens, begonias, and caladiums. The choices for sun are almost numberless. Geraniums and petunias are classic sun-loving container plants, and are available in a wide array of colors.

To keep your annuals blooming their best all season long, make sure to water often enough to avoid wilting and deadhead spent flowers. An occasional application of slow-release organic fertilizer will help, too.

