

## Horticare Nursery Basic Gardening Tips



The three most important considerations for successful gardening are:

- 1. Soil Conditions**
- 2. Watering**
- 3. Fertilizing**

### **1. Soil Conditions**

Determine the present quality of your soil. If your soil has too much clay or too much sand, you need to amend it before planting. Up to 60% of amendment may be necessary. "Amendments" include peat moss, planting mix, organic humus, composted manure and gypsum.

If soil has too much clay there will not be enough oxygen for the roots to "breathe." Clay soils stay wet too long, encouraging molds and fungus to grow. Consequently, roots suffocate or die of disease. Roots, like our lungs, need a balance of moisture, air and nutrients. In this case, gypsum and plant mix would be beneficial.

### **2. Watering**

The condition of your soil determines how you water. If you amend your soil properly watering will be less frequent and much more effective. After the soil is amended, concentrate on the individual plant's water requirements.

Lawns and most annuals have a shallow root system (3-8 inches). Water plants about every three days. Never water every day. This prevents oxygen from re-entering soil space and causes the roots to suffocate.

Shrubs and trees have deeper roots (up to three feet for shrubs, more for trees) and need deeper, less frequent watering every 7-10 days. Once established, some plants require watering even less frequently than that.

The two most important rules of watering are: 1. Thoroughly saturate the root system & 2. Do not water again until soil is somewhat dry. Plants need a good, deep drink (a little water on the tongue of a thirsty man will not quench his thirst). Over the millennia, plants have developed the ability to wait for rain. Over watering and frequent, shallow watering are the most common problems and the hardest to remedy. If soil condition is poor and too much or too little water is applied, plants become stressed and unable to fight off problem invaders such as insects and diseases. Plants must have good air spaces (pore spaces) in the soil in order to thrive.

Always apply water slowly, thoroughly saturating the root system. Allow soil to become nearly dry before watering again.

### **3. Fertilizing**

Never fertilize a dry plant. Yes, you mix the fertilizer in water, but you don't then pour it on a thirsty plant. You need to thoroughly water your dry plant one day before feeding. Fertilizer "burns" the root of dry plants but plump, moisture-filled roots happily drink it up.

Do not feed sickly plants! The problem may be poor soil condition, not the plant itself. Try fixing the soil first!

Annuals are the "speed demons" of the plant family. They produce all their growth and flowers in one season. They need a lot of fuel. Feed annuals every two weeks for best results.

Perennials fall into many different categories for feeding. A general rule would be to feed with Nursery Special once every three months during growing season.

One last note on planting in poor soil that has been amended: Most gardeners dig a new hole for planting, removing most native (existing) soil, then add 75-100% of amendment in the space. In clay soil, this method will create a loose-draining area surrounded by a wall of clay. The amended area will act like a sump, drawing all the moisture that is trapped in the surrounding clay soil. Mix 1/2 native soil with 1/2 amendment.

### **Recommended Products...**

1. Flower Food - Highly concentrated so weaker dilutions are possible.
2. Planting Mix - Ideal for amending garden soil.
3. Potting Soil - For gardening in pots...this is where you begin!
4. Safer Products - Low-toxicity pesticides & fungicides for minor insect infestation & fungus
5. Nursery Special - A timed-release fertilizer to add to your "heavy feeders" for better blooms. Use along with regular fertilizer.
6. Miracle Grow - Hose attachment that "makes fertilizing a breeze"
7. Water Wand - Makes watering a pleasure. Be careful, though...you could have so much fun that you over water. Use low pressure only.
8. Snail & Slug Bait - Use faithfully every two weeks. Water soil surface lightly before spreading out.