



Drought and the effect on our gardening psyche.

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With water restrictions raising the awareness of the water shortage we now face, I am concerned that there may be a long-term detrimental impact on our gardening psyche in the years to come. Greenspace (trees and shrubs) are essential in our urban environment, unfortunately over the past 20 years there has been a dramatic decrease in the amount of greenspace in our populated areas. Will our psyche pertaining to gardening become even less plant focussed because we perceive that we cannot sustain plants in a drier environment of the future? If this is the case we are heading for disaster big time.

We need not be overly concerned regarding our gardens at all. From a horticultural viewpoint, nearly every established garden is basically 'drought proof', very seldom do we see established trees and shrubs die where only the lack of moisture is to blame. Just a little understanding of the water needs of trees and shrubs will enable all of us to have healthy gardens now and into the future.

I have seen more problems in gardens from over-watering, or incorrect watering, than from a lack of moisture. Some simple hints can make a big difference.

- An established plant requires far less water than a newly planted one.
- Plants need most water in springtime / early summer.
- Understand that the root zone of a plant is generally 20-25cm underground.
- Water less often, but in greater quantity, even during the peak of summer I would only water my garden once every three weeks to a month, but I would ensure that the moisture penetrates deep into the roots.
- In the not too distant future, when we are able to water our lawns again, the grass root zone is only approximately 50mm, once your water has penetrated this far the rest is wasted. Most people over-water their lawns!
- A newly planted shrub or tree requires water about once a week during the first spring and summer. Somewhere between 4 to 6 litres is all it will need each watering. Make sure that the water seeps into the roots, not into the surrounding soil. I do this by making a little dam around the roots.

Happy gardening!
Wes



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