



Growing Roots Together- Lynnwood  
Gardening Watering Tips  
Resource List  
May 2020

***Proper watering techniques can save you time and money and keep your plants healthy!***

***Remember: Water the roots, not the leaves***

*Check for soil moisture/do the finger test before you water. Just because the top of the soil is dry does not mean you need to water!*

**Soil Types & Moisture levels**

Moisture levels in soils vary depending on soil types and even between different pots and raised beds. If your soil is healthy it should feel like a wrung-out sponge after watering, but not stay soggy or heavy (clay soils). Sandy and loose soils will allow water to run off and drain too quickly. Try adding compost/organic matter to the soil.

**Water Deeply\***

Let the water soak in and water again. If the water runs off the surface, top dress around the base of the plant with fresh compost. When planting, create a trough around the plant base that will hold the water. For pots, water several times until you see the water begin to drain out of the bottom.

*\*A note on tomatoes:* Tomatoes have deep roots that will search for and access water deep in the soil. Tomatoes prefer to be watered deeply, less often (drying out some before watering again encourages the roots to grow deeper). Towards the end of summer, when all the fruit is set, water less often/cut off the water to stress the plant and encourage it to ripen the fruit.

**When to Water**

This is an age-old question: *Do I water in the morning or the evening?*

There is good rationale for both arguments. Essentially you just don't want to water in the heat of the day, or the water will evaporate too quickly, before the roots have time to absorb it. I prefer to water in the early morning, but that doesn't always work out – in that case I water before the sun goes down so that the leaves of the plants have time to dry out before sundown. Wet leaves on tomatoes and squash, during humid summer nights, can make them more susceptible to fungal issues.

## **Drip Irrigation Systems**

Irrigation systems (including soaker hoses) that slowly deliver water directly to the top of the soil are great ways to ensure that water gets absorbed into the soil versus running off. Make sure you are leaving it on long enough for the water to really penetrate deeply – check the moisture level at the roots of plants after you water and before watering again. You will still need to check moisture levels and adjust your watering days/times depending on the types of plants/sizes of plants and rainfall amounts. For that reason, I do not like preprogrammed irrigation settings for vegetable gardens (unless it's for temporary use).

Resources:

[Snohomish Conservation District](#) – site visits, rain barrels, soil testing resources

Drip irrigation kits – Home Depot or Lowe's has a simple kit that includes everything you need for a small garden. More advanced systems/design your own at [DripWorks.com](http://DripWorks.com)

*Please reach out if you have any questions and to sign up to get notified about upcoming Urban Farming courses!*

*Together we grow,*

Marni Swart

[GrowingRootsTogether@gmail.com](mailto:GrowingRootsTogether@gmail.com)

206-963-5700

Instagram: @Farmer\_Marni

Facebook.com/GrowingRootsTogether