

WATERING THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

An adequate supply of water during the growing season is directly related to produce quality and yields.

Watering Guidelines

- Conserve water with proper soil preparation, mulching and efficient irrigation.
- Check soil moisture regularly.
 - Use houseplant watering meter to check moisture level (recognize this is somewhat inaccurate - just a guide).
- Irrigate when top 2-4 inches of soil is dry to touch.
- Apply 1 inch of water every 4 days (rule of thumb - adjust as needed).
 - Vegetables use about 1/4 inch of water per day depending on temperatures, wind, stage of crop development, type of crop.
- Most cool-season vegetables need consistent moisture during entire life span.
- Seedlings need more water at shallower depth.
- Larger plants and root crops consume more water than seedlings.
- Mature plants need less frequent deeper watering.
- Clay soils hold more water.
- Hot, windy weather increase water demand significantly.
- Over/under watering makes plants vulnerable to insects and disease.

Critical Water Periods for Vegetables

- Seed germination (keep soil moist until seeds germinate)
- First few weeks of development
- Immediately after transplanting
- During flowering and fruit production

Irrigation Methods (in Colorado cannot rely on rainfall for adequate moisture)

- Overhead sprinkler
- Drip Irrigation
 - In-line drip tubing with emitters
 - Soaker hoses
 - Bubblers and drippers
- Hose/hand water