

Seasonal Tips for the Garden

Winter Tips



Winter watering schedules should be adjusted to about one third of the summer frequency for deciduous and dormant desert plants, but water deeply each time.



Deep watering before a freeze protects trees and shrubs from some of the effects of freezing temperatures.



Do not water aloes and succulents prior to freezing temperatures; fleshy plants survive freezing temperatures best if the soil around them is dry.



Tempted to trim? Wait until all danger of frost is past before trimming frost-damaged plants. Plants may experience deeper damage if trimmed ends of branches are exposed to a late frost.

Scraping the stem will reveal whether the stem is alive or not, and where to trim for spring re-growth.



Improving your soil reduces watering. Soils with high clay content hold moisture well, too well for some desert plants, and can be amended with a small amount of organic matter and coarse sand.

Use decomposed bark/forest mulch instead and keep the amount below 5% in the soil.



Never water succulents directly in advance of a freeze. Most succulents survive freezing temperatures best if the soil around them is dry.

Trees, shrubs and small plants survive mild frost better if they are watered deeply immediately prior to the drop in temperature.

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Group plants thoughtfully and water wisely. Select trees, shrubs, ground covers, perennials and annuals that naturally grow together and use about the same amount of water.



Your garden color palette is a lot like putting an outfit together – if you wouldn't wear the colors together, don't plant them together.



Shrubs create the basic foundation for landscape. Select shrubs with a variety of flower colors and blooming periods to provide seasonal impact; or use them as accents for borders or hedges.



Because of different watering needs, it is best to place trees and shrubs and small shrubs/ground covers on separate valves.



If you can't install different watering runs for trees, shrubs, and plants, you can vary the flow of water to each by installing sprinkler heads which allow greater or smaller amounts of water per watering session.



Mulch saves water. Add one to two inches of organic mulch to reduce evaporation, cool the soil and control weeds. Use organic mulches such as bark chips or wood shavings, or inorganic mulches like rock and gravel.

Check and water new plants, shrubs and trees daily if needed, for the first two weeks after planting. Gradually reduce watering to twice weekly.

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Prepare the soil before planting flowers or plants. Add organic matter or compost one to two inches deep and till in to a 12-inch depth. This aids in maximum water efficiency and helps the soil hold water, permits better water absorption and feeds nutrients to your plants.



Select plants and flowers by their specific water and sunlight needs. Gray-leaved annuals and perennials are often more drought tolerant. Water-storing plants like cactus and succulents have low-water needs and are drought resistant. Annuals and bedding plants should be placed in pots or in a seasonal garden space to prevent over-watering of low-water use plants, shrubs and trees.



Soaker hoses or drip irrigation are more than efficient than sprinklers. They deliver water near roots and have less evaporation.



Water early in the morning to attract birds to your garden and to help keep the roots of your plants cooler during the heat of the day.



To establish a wildlife habitat in your backyard, you need plants that will provide:

- Natural plant-based food
- Water
- Cover
- A place to raise their young



To attract hummingbirds, choose plants with red and tubular flowers. Red and yellow flowers attract butterflies and bees, both necessary for fruit and vegetable pollination.

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Low Water Vegetation and Landscaping photos courtesy of the Fountain Hills Photography Club members.

Spring Contributors: Andy Felice and Charlotte McCluskey

Summer Tips



Tree shade lowers air and soil temperature, reducing plant and soil moisture loss.



Planting trees that shade the west side of your house will reduce the inside temperature of your home and provides shade for heat-absorbing groundcover.



During droughts or periods of drying winds, place container plants in the deepest shade they can tolerate. Wet the entire root ball, double pot by setting small pots inside larger ones with a layer of sand or gravel between.



Know how often your plants need to be watered. Water again when a screwdriver won't penetrate the soil more than four inches. Often this may be no more than every two or three weeks.



Boulders can cost as much as a tree, but they add year-round design interest and do not have to be watered. They also serve as an interesting background to plants, cactus and groundcover that benefit from the shade and shelter.

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Water features with re-circulating water basins can be filled by hand when you desire the soothing sound of flowing water, but do not want to run the feature all the time.



Water features give your patio the sense of a cool oasis. Flowing water can be used in landscape design to mimic a wash and the energy water brings to the desert.



Planting the areas around a water feature with red, yellow or tubular flowers attracts birds and butterflies to your garden oasis.