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How to: Create a drought-tolerant garden

All gardeners know the basis of vegetable growth is narrowed down to two things - sunlight and water. And although a gardener may take extra time out of their day to water each of their vegetables, drought can still cause damages and issues to vegetables in the garden. There are several options for gardeners to help remedy this issue.

Picking the right plants:

When it comes to gardeners living in areas more likely to experience drought, it's very important they ensure they are picking the appropriate plants to grow in the area. If you experience drought, the first step to avoiding drought damages is to grow drought-tolerant species. Drought-tolerant species include wolf willow, sea holly, lamb's ears, rhubarb, Swiss chard, asparagus, sweet potato, artichokes, peppers, mustard greens, legumes and many others.

Ways to make a garden drought tolerant:

Even if you've done your due diligence and planted drought-tolerant vegetables in the garden or drought-tolerant plants in the yard, there are other avenues you can explore to help decrease drought damages in your garden. One option is to protect and insulate the soil by adding a 3- to 4-inch layer of mulch around your plants. Mulch can cut the need for watering in half, and it can create cooler soil for the plants. The best items to use as mulch include grass clippings, leaves, pine needles, straw or shredded bark. This keeps the soil



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cool and it reduces water evaporation from the soil.

Another way to prevent drought is by planting in raised beds. Raised beds will help retain water more so than normal beds. Also, if you plant the vegetables in groups or offsets, it helps reduce drought damages rather than planting in vegetables in the traditional rows.

Ways to water:

There are many different ways to water your plants instead of the traditional hose or watering can. A drip system may help reduce drought. When overhead watering, the water will land on the leaves of the plant and evaporate more quickly than if plants are watered by a drip system. It's also important to take note of when you are choosing to water your plants. The best time to water plants is in the early morning or late evening, ideally between the hours of 9 p.m.



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and 6 a.m. This reduces evaporation, as the sun isn't at its strongest point.

Another watering tip is to water young plants more heavily than established plants. Another time to increase your watering, even when the plants are in their mature state, is to water more when the plants are setting their fruit.

Other tips:

To be sure you are growing drought-tolerant vegetables, in addition to planting drought-tolerant varieties, stick to a strict watering schedule and amend the soil with organic matter to provide the right nutrients. For some plants, you can even utilize a shade cloth, which may lessen a hot sun's effects during a drought.

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