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How to: Have a Watering Schedule for Vegetables

Water is one of the main components a vegetable needs to grow but under-watering can lead to dry ground and wilting plants and overwatering is one of the main mistakes a gardener makes when it comes to their plants. Following a correct watering schedule throughout a vegetable's growth will ensure it reaches the harvest season.

When to water:

Watering schedules start at the beginning, when you either plant the seeds or transplant a seedling into the garden. Saturate the hole prepared for the plant with water. Once growth begins, it may seem counterproductive, but one of the best times to water is immediately following a rainfall, especially if the rainfall didn't produce adequate watering. Watering after it rains ensures the water reaches the deep root system of the plant.

Get the most out of watering:

The amount of water a vegetable requires per week depends on the type of soil it grows in, so the best place to start is establishing good soil. To prepare the soil to best receive rainfall, gardeners should cultivate their garden with a rototiller or hand tools. Cultivating the garden aerates the soil, which will improve the retention of rainfall. Cultivate frequently to prepare the crops for rainfall, especially during the hot, mid-summer months. Cultivate three days following a rain storm to prepare the soil for the next rain. After cultivation, don't walk on the soil for three days as to not compact the soil.

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Another water retention tip is to use mulch. Mulch can reduce moisture from evaporating from the soil's surface.

Vegetables and watering schedules:

Different vegetables require different amounts of water. Vegetables such as beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, carrots, onions and parsnips don't require frequent watering. The best time to water these vegetables is to provide adequate watering when the crops are young, and then only water to prevent the soil from becoming bone dry. Vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, celery, leafy greens, cucumbers and squash require frequent water to ensure the best harvest, at least 1 to 2 gallons of water per week depending on the vegetable.

Other vegetables require certain amounts of watering during different growth spells to benefit their development. These include beans, corn, peas, potatoes and tomatoes.

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Beans and peas specifically need water when their flowers form, when pods form and during picking season. Corn requires adequate water once tassels form and when the cob begins to swell. Potatoes need plenty of water, at least 2 gallons per week, once they are the size of marbles. Tomatoes need at least 1 gallon twice a week or more for up to four weeks after transplanting and when flowers and fruit begins to form.

Determing rainfall:

A way to prevent overwatering is to know how much vegetables were naturally watered from the rain. Place a rain gauge or even something as simple as a bucket in the garden or near container vegetables to see how much rain fell each week.

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