

# *Caring For Your New Garden*

## **Daily Garden Inspection**

Spend at least five minutes each day inspecting your garden for pests, diseases, proper soil moisture, and plant growth. The best first step in caring for your garden is to observe it carefully.

## **Seeds**

We have planted your seeds at the proper depth with the proper spacing. Ensure that the soil around your newly planted seeds remains moist, but not sopping wet. Water gently so as not to wash away or otherwise disturb the location of the seeds. Water often enough to prevent the soil from becoming dry and crusty. After plants emerge, water less often but deeper. If seedlings seem to wilt too quickly in the heat, water more often until plants are larger and more well established.

## **Transplants**

It may take a week or more for your transplants to establish themselves in your garden. Some slow growth is normal at first but growth should pick up once the plants have established their roots and have acclimated to the environment of your yard.

## **Watering**

Watering should be done approximately every 2 to 5 days depending on the temperature and weather. You should check the moisture of your soil regularly to learn your garden's drying pattern.

Check the moisture of the soil by digging into the soil a few inches or poking in to the soil with your finger as deep as you can go. If soil is moist, no watering is needed at that time. If soil is dry, water thoroughly. Remember that soil deeper down may be more moist than soil closer to the surface.

If you find that your plants are wilting early in the morning, they might not be getting enough water. If they are wilting and your soil is still moist, you may be watering too much.

It is best to water directly at the base of the plants to put water right in the root zone. This can be done with a drip or soaker-hose irrigation system, otherwise it can be done by hand with a hose and shower-type nozzle. Using a lawn sprinkler can also be done. It is best to use these in the early morning so water has time to penetrate the soil as well as dry off of the plants so as to help avoid diseases that thrive on moisture.

## **Pests**

During your inspections, check for damaged leaves or stunted growth which may indicate a pest problem. Large pests like slugs and caterpillars should be picked off by hand and squished (or better yet, fed to your chickens!). Small pests, like aphids, will need to be eliminated by the use of a good commercial or home-made organic pest control spray.

Texas A&M Integrated Pest Management: <http://vegipm.tamu.edu/>

## **Diseases**

Observe your plants for any sort of disease problems by looking at the color and texture of the leaves and stems. Some diseases can be corrected by adjusting watering practices, correcting nutrient deficiencies in the soil or applying the proper fungicides. Other diseases however, are not able to be cured and affected plants should be removed from your garden and destroyed.

Texas Plant Disease Handbook: <http://plantdiseasehandbook.tamu.edu/>