



Sage Advice from the Roundhouse....

HOW TO WATER YOUR NATIVE PLANTS

Most folks who plant natives are puzzled about how much to water them. Here are some basic guidelines. Keep in mind that soil type (sand, clay...), location (inland, coast...) and micro-climate (wind, shade...) are all factors that affect individual watering schedules.

California native plants are perfectly adapted to our arid climate and can withstand extended periods of heat and drought. However, like all nursery stock, container-grown California native plants need careful attention and regular water during their establishment period in the landscape. Depending on your conditions, regular water can mean anywhere between twice a week to twice a month (i.e., flat clay vs. sloping sand).

Get to know how long your soil holds moisture by checking six to eight inches below the surface between waterings. Allow the

excess moisture in the soil to drain completely, but irrigate again before it becomes fully dry.

Monitor your new plants closely for signs of stress, but don't immediately assume a lack of moisture; both over and under-watering problems can manifest themselves as wilt.

After about six to nine months of regular water, you can begin to taper the regular watering to once or twice a month. After initial planting and establishment (1-2 years), many natives will naturalize to their environment and survive on rainfall alone. To keep your plants looking their best, some supplemental water, especially during dry years and summer months is recommended. Refer to individual plants in the Tree of Life catalog, "Plants of El Camino Real" for this information. For assured success, plant fall through spring, during the cool season.



A FEW MORE IRRIGATION TIPS:

- During periods of warm weather, water new plants by hose, drip or low volume "micro" sprinkler in early morning. Do not water during the heat of the day.
- High frequency, short duration (3 or more times a week for a few minutes) with small amounts of water is harmful to natives.
- Low frequency (1-4 times a month), long duration (4-12 hours) irrigation is best to thoroughly soak the soil and allow vital oxygen to re-enter the root zone. For individual plants, drip irrigation or hose watering is best. For large areas, micro-sprinklers are best. Remember, mulch will preserve moisture between waterings.
- Overhead irrigation (especially in the heat) is not recommended, as prolonged leaf wetting can promote disease
- In well-drained soil, water is not typically an issue when the appropriate plants are chosen for the site (i.e., full sun, inland...), and planting takes place during the cool, rainy season

PLANTS OF EL CAMINO REAL

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