

# URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

## How to: Garden in drought conditions

Every gardener knows that hot, dry summer weather can suck all of the moisture out of the ground, leaving wilted and thirsty plants, but when drought conditions hit, it can be even worse on your plants.

A drought is a problem nearly all climates can struggle with, not just the warmer areas. When a drought hits, it means there is a period of unusually dry weather that can lead to vegetable and crop damages as well as shortage in the water supply. A drought can be caused strictly by weather, but it also can be caused by overuse and overpopulation. When a drought hits and there is not enough moisture to supply for what the plants need, it can lead to lower plant population and lower yields come harvest time due to the drought hindering the plants' abilities to germinate. The plants will wilt and even develop crispy brown edges along the leaves. A drought also can weaken the plant, making it more susceptible to fall victim to pests or diseases. It also can have an effect on the winter hardiness of perennials.

### How to counteract a drought:

Although there's nothing a gardener can do to prevent a drought, there are several actions they can take to lessen the damages on their plants, yard and crops.

The most obvious action to take during a drought is to water your garden. This may seem simple, but most plants need at least an inch of moisture a week to remain happy and



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healthy. Also be sure to add a thick layer of mulch to help insulate the soil and prevent evaporation in hot, dry weather.

Another action to take is to stop fertilizing your plants during a drought. Fertilizer will encourage a plant to grow more, which is good, but the more a plant grows, the more moisture it requires to stay healthy. Also, if natural rainfall doesn't occur to dilute the fertilizer application, the fertilizer can build up in the soil and even burn your plant's roots, which will cause even more damage.

Another action you can take is to increase your weeding. Weeds will take moisture out of the ground for their own growth, so it's important to get rid of the weeds so what little moisture is available during a drought will go straight to your plants. Also be sure to deadhead your flowers because removing the dead blooms will save energy since the plant won't be putting out energy, which



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requires more water, to produce seeds.

## Other actions:

Other actions to help prepare your garden for a drought and to learn how to best react when a drought occurs is to be sure to plant drought-tolerant plants, especially if you're in an area that is susceptible to drought.

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