



*Don't guess how much, how little or when to water:  
Use this checklist as your guide.*

**By Jessica Walliser**

- ❑ Water all plants during morning hours—before 10 a.m. This allows ample time for foliage to dry before nightfall and helps prevent diseases. It also staves off water stress during the warmest part of the day.
- ❑ During periods of active growth and production, most plants require about 1 inch of water per week from Mother Nature or from your irrigation system. Buy a rain gauge and check it after each shower to total the amount of rainfall each week, supplementing when necessary. Remember, though, if plants are well mulched, you'll need to irrigate much less frequently.
- ❑ Whenever possible, use recycled rainwater to irrigate plants. It's free of chlorine and salt, and it contains very few dissolved minerals—plus, it's free. Harvest rainwater in underground or aboveground cisterns and/or rain barrels.
- ❑ Drip irrigation systems make the most efficient use of water by sending it directly to the plant's root zones. Very little water is lost to evaporation, as is the case with overhead watering programs.
- ❑ Locate plants with similar water requirements close to each other. That way, thirsty plants can be watered more frequently, while more drought tolerant varieties can go longer between drenchings.
- ❑ Develop a watering rotation system for the summer months to help prevent wells from going dry and cisterns from being drained. Do a line drawing of your fields and gardens, and section off smaller segments to create a rotation plan. If no permanent irrigation system is in place, make sure you have enough hose length to access every area and the right type of sprinkler to reach all plants in the segment. Taller plants necessitate a standing sprinkler, while a simple, ground-level oscillating model can be used in areas with shorter plants.

