

A word about watering

I'm not sure who was more surprised, the deer or me.

The deer stood under the apple tree, munching on fallen apples. I walked to within five feet of it and wondered if it was going to charge or run. It ran, but stopped outside the hedge where a car with Massachusetts plates stopped while the driver leaned out the window and snapped pictures with his iPhone. The four kids in the car were all excited about seeing a real live deer. I was more concerned about getting the pest off the property before it ate the rest of the flowers, shrubs, lettuce, sorrel and anything else it could eat.

I walked back across the lawn only to meet a foal prancing along as if it had not a care in the world. The deer was obviously a mom who'd lost her foal and had called for it to follow. It ran through the hedge after mom and, I hope, headed for the state park across the street – and another tourist photo-op.

It seems that this year, there are more deer than ever. They're regularly appearing during the daytime to eat flowers, shrubs and just about anything else – and this is summer, when there's plenty of food around. If we get a harsh winter and food gets scarce, we'll have a real deer problem when they forage where they've never foraged before.

This year has not been one of the more memorable ones for gardeners. Lots of rain, a cool spring and an early summer delayed things a lot, and now the oppressive heat and humidity aren't doing the plants any good. In the dog days of summer, with no rain for a couple of weeks, the ground is starting to get parched and in need of water.

The best time to water is in the early evening, when the sun is low enough that it will not evaporate water from the ground, but is still warm enough that plant leaves can dry off before dark (wet leaves tend to harbor diseases).

The best type of hose for watering is a soaker hose. Take a soaker hose – you can buy them at Jamestown Hardware or the Secret Garden – and bury it under the mulch or in the soil about three to four inches down. Leave it on



The Island Garden

By Roger Marshall

for an hour or more so that water can gently leach through the hose and into the ground. Plant leaves stay dry, but the ground is soaked to allow the plant roots to absorb moisture.

Another good form of irrigation is a drip line. A number of drip emitters are installed in a hose and connected to an outlet. When the water is turned on, plants get fed a drip at a time. If you have a lot of hanging baskets or containers, a drip line is perfect because you can easily put an emitter in each basket and let it drip slowly all day, at about one or two drips a minute. With both a soaker hose and a drip line, you can add fertilizer

to the water solution quite easily. However, you should have a non-return valve on the waterline in case water pressure suddenly fails and fertilizer gets sucked back into your pipes.

As a last resort, use your garden hose to water your plants, but remember to soak the ground thoroughly before you stop watering. That often means a 10 to 15-minute soaking. If you think you've watered enough, scrape off some soil and see how far the moisture has penetrated. In most cases, you'll be surprised to find that it is less than half an inch.

In my opinion, the hardest way to water is with a watering can that uses water out of a rain barrel. Having said that, rain barrel water is untreated with chlorine and is more beneficial to your plants. I find that watering the 300-sq. ft. greenhouses uses most of a 55-gallon rain barrel, but that the plants like the water better than water from the faucet. You can see that plants watered from the rain barrel grow larger, faster.

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Conanicut Island Sailing Foundation (CISF), a tax exempt, charitable organization has been established to promote sailing and sailboat racing at every level. CISF, a 501 (C) (3) corporation, raises funds through 100% tax-deductible donations. The Foundation solicits and accepts cash, securities and boats to be sold and leased. We plan to distribute all realized revenue to sailors; these funds will be awarded based on the individual needs of the applicants. Our goal is to achieve sailing excellence with a special focus on Conanicut Island Residents. Funding is available for participants of all ages. This includes those involved with junior sailing at the instructional level, racing in regattas, training, coaching and the purchase of related equipment.



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