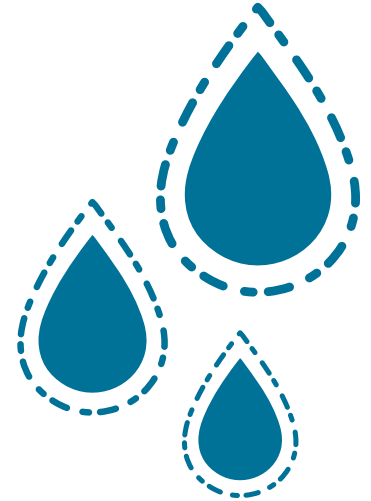


Water-wise vegetable gardening

For your home and community garden

Fresh, clean water is a limited resource. Earth is 70 per cent water, but of that only 3 per cent is fresh water, and 0.5 per cent of that is available for human use. The earth's water supply is constantly strained due to growing populations and continuing drought, as well as the seasonal supply uncertainty that comes along with our ever-changing climate. All gardeners have a role to play in protecting our most precious resource!



Water conservation tips for your vegetable garden

Follow row spacing or plant spacing guidelines – Leaves from neighbouring plants will shade the soil, helping to conserve surface moisture and reduce weed growth.

Choose bush varieties – Plants that grow low to the ground will lose less water through transpiration than those that grow quickly or twine up to the sky.

Improve the soil – Soil with lots of organic matter (ie. leaves, grass clippings, compost) slows the movement of water from the soil to the subsoil, giving plants a chance to take in what they need. To help retain moisture, mix peat moss and compost into the soil at planting time. A good starting point is two units of soil to one unit of compost and one unit of peat. Monitor and amend annually.

Mulch well – Adding a mulch layer on top of your soil and between plants, prevents moisture from evaporating directly from the soil surface and it can greatly reduce weeds. Did you know free mulch is available at the [Broadview Enviroservice Station](#)?

Weed diligently – Weeds can compete for moisture with your plants. Don't let them win!

Time it right – If you are using a hose nozzle, water your garden before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. to avoid water loss to evaporation (this does not apply to watering directly from a watering can).

How to make sure you are giving your crops the right amount of water

- From your hose this can be calculated by using a measured bucket. Turn the hose on full and then time how long it takes to fill the bucket. Most phones have a stop-watch function, so you should be able to time it by the seconds. If it takes one minute to fill a four litre bucket, then the flow is four litres per minute. Water your garden for one minute to give your garden four litres of water.
- Use a measured watering can to ensure you are not over watering your crop!

Consider using a rain barrel

Did you know your garden likes rain water much more than the treated water that comes from the tap? Collecting rainwater from rooftop runoff provides an ample supply of free, soft water containing no chlorine, lime or calcium. With fewer types of sediment and dissolved salts than tap water, rain water is ideal for vegetable gardens, raised planter beds, indoor plants and other uses, such as car washing and window cleaning. Using rain water can also reduce your monthly water bill, and storing it can be useful during a water ban.



Make sure your rain barrel:

- is childproof
- has an overflow directing water away from the house foundation
- is on a firm and level base
- has a screen to keep out leaves, mosquitoes, squirrels and other critters
- is drained before winter, and moved from under the downspout

Strathcona County hosts a rain barrel sale each year in spring. For more information visit strathcona.ca/rainbarrel

Vegetable	Critical time(s) to water	Litres of water required (approx.) (for a five foot row)
Beans	When flowers form and during pod-forming and picking	8 litres/week
Beets	Before the soil dries out	4 litres at early stage; 8 litres every 2 weeks
Broccoli	Don't let the soil dry out for 4 weeks after transplanting	4-6 litres per week
Brussel sprouts	Don't let the soil dry out for 4 weeks after transplanting	4-6 litres per week
Cabbage	Water frequently in dry weather for best crop	8 litres/week
Carrots	Before the soil dries out	4 litres at early stages; 8 litres every 2 weeks as roots mature
Cauliflower	Water frequently for best crop	8 litres/week
Celery	Water frequently for best crop	8 litres/week
Corn	When tassels form and when cobs swell	4 litres at each of these stages
Cucumbers	Water frequently for best crop	4 litres/week
Lettuce/spinach	Water frequently for best crop	8 litres/week
Onions	In dry weather, water in early stage to get plants going	2-4 litres/week if soil is very dry
Parsnips	Before soil gets bone-dry	4 litres/week in early stages
Peas	When flowers form and during pod-forming and picking	4 litres/week
Potatoes	When flowers form; water frequently for best results	4 litres/week
Squash	Water frequently for best crop	4 litres/week
Tomatoes	Water for 3-4 weeks after transplanting and when flowers and fruit form	4 litres twice a week or more