

WATERING & MULCHING

It really does seem that many of you are worried about strict hosepipe bans in the coming summers judging by the comments I am getting from some of you out there. So I thought it an opportune time to write on the subject of watering and mulching, so you can do you best to fight off droughts, if they appear.



An ongoing dry period can mean you harvest very small yields or even no harvest whatsoever. Also heavy rain after a prolonged dry spell can cause crops such as carrots, beetroot and tomatoes to split as they put on a sudden spurt of growth when they get some water. Even watering is essential for them. Until relatively recently, crops were productive even without very much watering, save for a little water around those plants you have just transplanted.

To help fight the scourge of the modern day droughts, you must increase the water retention capabilities of your soil by digging in loads and loads and loads of adequately rotted organic matter. Another good tip I stick to is I ensure the top 6 inches of soil is evenly moist throughout, but not saturated or waterlogged, at the time you are planting out or sowing seeds direct into an open seed bed. This draws roots down and away from the hot sun.

Lastly, put down a mulch in late spring. You could consider this another method of manuring, even though in is clearly in-season. A one inch layer of good garden compost or leaf mould spread amongst your young plants once they have fully established themselves works wonders. Remember though, that the soil needs to be moist before you mulch as it is meant to keep moisture in your soil and prevents the evaporation process. If the ground is dry before an application of mulch, there obviously is no moisture to seal in and can also be extremely counterproductive as if it does rain after the mulch application on dry land, the mulch prevents the water permeating down to the roots of your prized plants.

Mulching not only helps retain water, it increases the fertility of your soil and helps keep weeds down. Once you have done all this, you have done all you can to fight the droughts. But if a dry period does happen, you will still need to water things like tomatoes, beans, aubergines, onions and courgettes as they like the water content of the soil to be constant without any fluctuations.

Between the crucial time of flowering and full pod development of beans, you need to water gently but well every 5 days during a dry spell. Watering in the morning and in the evening are the best times as evaporation is lower and if you water during the hot midday sun you may scorch your plants. To save on water, apply the water around the base of the plants only; you don't need to water the whole garden.

If you only have a few plants to water, place a flowerpot in the ground next to the plant and water into this. This directs the water down to the roots of the plants and prevents run off. Also don't make the mistake of not applying enough water when you are watering. So often I see people applying just enough water to turn the soil dark around their plants. This is totally inadequate. If you water too sparingly, and the ground is very dry, you will find the roots of the plants come up to the soil surface to get at the water you've just applied. If you don't water again very quickly, the plant could easily just dry out and die because you have drawn the root upwards, where it is hotter and dryer.

If the ground is moist when planting or sowing, the roots will be drawn downwards and able to cope with dry weather. There is no advantage by watering inadequately and drawing roots upwards. If you can't water properly, don't water at all is my motto.

Lazy watering does more harm than good as it kills plants and wastes water. So come on, lets do our bit for water conservation and make our plants more drought tolerant in the process.

Happy Gardening
STUART MABBUTT
 April 2008

APRIL CROSSWORD ANSWERS BY ALISA

Across 1 St.George's 5 Bit 7 Usually 9 Lie 11 AB 13 Intense 17 Servicemaster 18 Wootton 19 CC 21 Duo 22 Leading 25 Yam 26 Farthings

Down 2 Gnu 3 Gel 4 Soya 5 Ballistic 6 The 8 Steventon 10 Indigo 12 Board Room 14 Season 15 Art 16 Ate 20 Clef 21 Day 23 Air 24 Gun

MSSSC: Marcham Sports, Scouts & Social Club

The pavilion & field off Morland Road

We had excellent feedback following our article in last months MAD News. We had reported our intent to carry on developing sport & youth activities irrespective of the outcome of the Anson Trusts plans. Thanks to all who responded with messages of support. A particular thanks to new friends who supported our Quiz Night in April. Much fun, great enthusiasm, some talent, some winners but no losers. Fantastic. Details of the next quiz is shown below along with dates for other events.

REGULAR BAR OPENING TIMES:

Every Friday - 8pm to 11pm

Every Saturday - after Football or Cricket

MAY SOCIAL EVENTS:

Quiz Night - Friday 9th May, 8.30.

Real Ale night - Friday 30th May. (Last Friday every month)

FUTURE EVENTS:

Summer Dance - Friday 11th July. Look out for details

We look forward to seeing you at the club

For more information contact Geoff Dix, secretary on 391577.

IS YOUR PC GIVING YOU A HEADACHE?

Are you interested in belonging (FREE!) to a group who have computers and can help each other with the inevitable problems? There are five people currently helping each other – why not join in? Email david@frasersoft.net.



MARCHAM TENNIS ASSOCIATION NEW SEASON 2008 - 2009

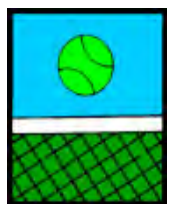
The locks to the courts will be changed on 10 May. If you wish to join the association for the year, please come to along to one of the sign-up sessions at the courts:

3.15 - 3.45pm Friday 9 May
10 - 11 am Saturday 10 May

or contact Meriel on 01865 391725.

Membership fees for 2008- 2009 are unchanged at:

Family:£44
 Adult:£22
 Junior (under 18 years): £14



STILL WANTED OLD PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWINGS OR PAINTINGS

The committee of the Marcham Society would like to thank everyone who has responded to their request for photos and information. If YOU have any photos, drawings or illustrations of the local area that you would share with Marcham Society, please contact Sheila Dunford (391 439).

Information Pages are for YOU to use – write to the editor by 20th month latest