



Enjoy the Summer

At this time of year it is common for people's minds to turn to holidays and getting away from work.

The garden, not surprisingly, tends to take a back seat. However now is not the time to forget your plants, if you want to enjoy them all year round. With the heat and dryness of summer, it only takes a day or two to turn a healthy flourishing garden into a scorched savannah. Now is the right time to make sure that watering is in hand.

Before leaving the garden to its own devices whilst you take your well earned break, it is essential that any prized plants will be watered whilst you are away. Some of you will have friends or house sitters that can be cajoled or reminded to keep an eye on things, for the rest of us it involves some form of automatic watering system. Watering systems can range from state of the art self contained systems, with their own storage tanks, to small but effective systems using a water timer and soaker hose or drippers.

Unfortunately it is not possible to say which type of system would be best for your garden or lifestyle and prices vary accordingly. What I can say is that there is a system for most budgets.

For most situations I would advocate the use of a water timer, such as those sold by Hozelock and Gardena, attached to the outdoor tap, to control the water to a soaker hose. Soaker hose, also known as leaky or drip hose, is best used for plants in beds and borders, it is wrapped around the base of the plants gently leaking water into the soil whilst the timer is on.

For containers and isolated plants a micro sprinkler or dripper would be better, applying the water directly to the root ball of the plant.

Although watering systems may seem complicated, in reality they are quite easy to install effectively with the correct advice, most garden centres should be capable of providing this.

What I would suggest is that any system you install is put in place at least a few weeks before you first go away, as the timing of the water will need to be adjusted. In this time you will need to keep an eye on the system until the amount of water being applied is adequate, but not

excessive. Care is initially required to ensure that the water is being applied long enough for it to soak into the soil as far as the root ball.

Whatever the system you use, this should always be done in combination with mulching the surface to reduce evaporation. Putting a layer of mulch, such as bark on the surface, dramatically reduces water loss from the soil. It enables the water to soak in slowly, rather than run off and for it to remain in the upper soil levels, which is important for establishing plants.

Once the watering is in hand I would recommend you relax and enjoy your holiday, with one less thing to worry about.

For more information or help with your planting contact The Big Plant Centre at Pantiles, Almnors Road, Lyne, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 0BJ or call 01932 872195 or visit the website at www.bigplantcentre.co.uk.

