

# THE PERILS OF OVERWATERING PLANTS

*in Arizona's Summer Heat*



*We Beautify the World*

**A**s the scorching Arizona summer arrives, gardeners and plant enthusiasts must understand the potential hazards of overwatering. While water is essential for plant growth and survival, excessive irrigation can lead to many problems. This article aims to shed light on the detrimental effects of overwatering plants in Arizona during the summer season and provide practical tips to maintain a healthy balance for your green companions.



## THE CHALLENGES OF ARIZONA'S ARID CLIMATE

Arizona's unique climate poses significant challenges for plant care, particularly during the summer months. With intense heat, low humidity, and limited rainfall, plants face the risk of desiccation and stress. While it may seem counterintuitive, overwatering exacerbates these challenges rather than alleviating them.

## ROOT HEALTH AND OXYGEN DEPRIVATION

Overwatering saturates the soil, leading to waterlogged conditions that impede the proper exchange of gases in the root zone. **When roots are deprived of oxygen, they become vulnerable to root rot and other diseases**, impairing the plant's ability to absorb nutrients and water effectively. This can result in wilting, yellowing leaves, stunted growth, or death.

## FUNGAL DISEASES AND PESTS

Excessive moisture creates a favorable environment for fungal pathogens, such as Pythium and Phytophthora, which thrive in damp conditions. These diseases can cause root rot, crown rot, and other infections that weaken the plant's health. Additionally, overwatering can attract pests like fungus gnats and mosquitoes, further compromising the well-being of your plants.

## WATER CONSERVATION AND COST EFFICIENCY

Considering Arizona's ongoing water scarcity concerns, overwatering harm your plants and contributes to wasteful water consumption. **Adopting appropriate watering practices can conserve this valuable resource and lower your water bills**, benefiting your garden and the environment.

## PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PROPER WATERING

- **Know your soil type.** Clay soil will hold water and require less frequent irrigation. Sandy or rocky soil will drain faster and require more frequent irrigation.
- **Understand your plants:** Different species have varying water requirements. Research and identify the specific watering needs of each plant to avoid overwatering or underwatering. Native plants will always be your best choice.
- **For clay soils, which are most typical, *water deeply and infrequently*:** Aim for deep watering sessions that wet the entire depth and width of the root zone rather than frequent shallow watering. This will encourage the development of an abundant root mass that will absorb the water needed for the high heat, high evaporation, low humidity period of summer.
- **Observe signs of plant stress:** Pay attention to signs of under-watering, such as wilting and leaf curling. It's crucial to differentiate between water stress and overwatering symptoms.
- **Monitor soil moisture:** Use a moisture meter or check the soil by hand to determine if watering is necessary. Ensure the top inch or two of the soil is dry before watering again. If you are in doubt of the proper irrigation frequency, check the soil just prior to the next irrigation cycle. If the moisture is still good, then add an additional day or two between the scheduled waterings. If the soil is totally dry, reduce the number of days between watering cycles.
- **Adjust irrigation schedules seasonally:**  
The watering frequency is related directly to the evaporation of water from the plant and the soil. Evaporation in January may be .06" per day while June may be .40" per day.
- **Optimize irrigation methods:** Employ efficient irrigation systems like drip irrigation or soaker hoses to deliver water directly to the root zone, minimizing evaporation and runoff.



Maintaining a healthy balance between watering and the unique challenges of Arizona's summer climate is crucial for successful plant care. Overwatering can lead to root problems, fungal diseases, increased pest activity, and unnecessary water waste. By understanding your plants' specific needs and implementing proper watering practices, you can ensure their health and conserve water resources in the arid environment of Arizona's scorching summers.