



HOW TO Choose the right irrigation equipment for your garden

Effective watering

There are many ways to apply water and different types of equipment to use:

- In-line systems with pop-up sprinklers or spaced risers and a variety of micro spray and drip fittings
- Soak and seep hoses
- Hose and sprinkler combinations
- Hand-held hoses and watering cans

Whatever equipment you use, aim to wet the soil, not the plants, and supply just enough water to achieve wetting to a depth of 10cm.

Applying water gently and at ground level is most effective. The harder your watering hits the soil, the more wasteful and damaging to the soil it's likely to be.

Watering in the evening or early morning helps minimise the effects of evaporation. Evaporation is greatest when water is sprayed and lowest when it seeps or drips. See our *How to: Water your garden effectively* leaflet for more tips.

Some equipment may take a few hours to install but will save time later, not to mention money, by helping you take better care of your garden. The best product for you depends on your budget, the size and layout of your garden and the type of plants that you grow.

In-line irrigation systems

Cheap starter kits make these easy and affordable, and you don't need special tools or skills to install them. They are also cheap and easy to expand. Micro-jet sprays are ideal for flowers, vegetables and plants with shallow roots. The range of full-circle, half-circle and quarter-circle spray, mist and drip nozzles means you can conserve water by delivering just the right amount to the right place.

The maximum water flow from your tap is critical, as it dictates the number of micro-jets or drippers that will operate effectively from one tap and how long you'll need to water for. There will be instructions on how to measure water flow with your starter kit or in an irrigation product guide available from garden product retailers. Use a tap timer, so you don't water for longer than needed.



Soak, seep or weep hoses

These hoses allow water to sink slowly and gently into the soil, so there will be less soil erosion and moisture loss to evaporation. Because they don't spray water into the air it's easy to forget that they're on, so use a tap timer.

Soak hoses have small holes along their underside. Place the hose on the ground then turn on the tap gradually until you have a steady trickle of water from all the holes.

Seep hoses (also called weep or leaky hoses) are made of dense spongy material and the water oozes out uniformly along their length. The hoses work at very low pressure, with soil's natural capillary action drawing the water in. These hoses should be placed under your mulch in direct contact with soil and can even be buried in the soil without clogging.



Soak hose



Seep hose



Watering by hand

The humble watering can may be all you need if you have a small garden or just a few plants in pots.

A hose with a flow trigger fitting and 'rose' spray head also allows you to apply water gently. Watering wands are great for reaching hanging baskets or watering at ground level without stretching or bending.



The most wasteful way to water is to use a hose with your thumb over the nozzle. This produces large droplets or jets of water that damage the surface of the soil and water tends to run off rather than soak in.

Stick to the rules

Unless you're watering by hand, watering is typically limited to two hours in the early morning or evening every second day. For details contact your local council.

Hose-sprinkler combinations

These systems are quick to install, but can be very wasteful of water. Portable sprinklers can't be aimed with much precision, so your house, paths and fences may get as wet as your garden. Even worse, a blast from the sprinkler can wash topsoil away, with sloping sections particularly vulnerable.

If you do use a sprinkler on garden beds, set it to water smaller areas gently and move it around. Always time your watering.

