

## Saving Water

At Churchill we benefit from having unmetered water, but this may not always be the case. We do, as a collective, pay the city a substantial lump sum for water use. As people concerned for our environment, we need to realize that excessive use of water use costs money, uses energy, adds chlorinated water to our crops and groundwater, removes nutrients by leaching, and pollutes nearby waterways.

Obviously, the flip side is that ample water produces larger crops faster. Fortunately, this year Mother Nature has been kind to us. Except for a short period around seeding time, rains have come just before the soil dries out. Still, there are ways to reduce water use.

- **Avoid unnecessary watering** - Don't water if we have had at least 12 mm of rain (half an inch) in the past week. It will accomplish nothing. (Exceptions might be during an extreme heat wave, when the cooling effect of watering might help, or a period of very hot dry windy weather.)
- **Water morning and evening** - Water early or late in the day when possible, to reduce loss by evaporation. Many drops, like beans, tomatoes and peppers, prefer early morning watering, as their leaves can then dry. Limiting the growth of mildews.
- **Water less often** - Water deeply once a week rather than lightly several times. This encourages plants to grow deeper roots, making them more drought resistant later in the year. As an added bonus, during the dry periods in between, wicking of water from deeper in the soil draws nutrients up into the root zone.
- **Water low** - Water at ground level if possible, rather than with a spray. This takes more time and energy, but it gets the water to the roots, and avoids damage of the leaves.
- **Use a mulch** - Mulch your plants before the really dry season hits. There is plenty of straw left, so use what you want. Water heavily at ground level, then add four inches of straw to prevent evaporation from the soil.
- **Reduce evapotranspiration** - Control weeds, many of which are extremely wasteful of water. Remember, most are weeds because they have evolved strategies that favour rapid growth and reproduction in disturbed habitats, and so there is nothing conservative about the way they use any resource.
- **Collect rinse water** - Use the rinse stations for cleaning your crops. We have provided large totes at each tap. Wash your carrots, beets, etc. into these bins, and if it necessary to scrub them use the bin as a basin. If there is already water in the bin, use it for the first rinse rather than turning on the tap. This will substantially reduce the amount of chlorinated water we pour directly back into the groundwater.
- **Reuse rinse water** - Use the water from the rinse stations as a source for watering. This will return water to the gardens that would otherwise have lost. It will also return soil and nutrients to the garden, reducing groundwater and creek pollution in the area. As a final bonus, after a couple of hours the water will be naturally dechlorinated, so it will be even better than tap water for your crops.