

KOLR-TV Mid-Day News Interview

KOLR-TV
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Subject to be discussed: Home Irrigation Tips During Drought
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Q: I've heard it mentioned that the Ozarks is always just two weeks away from drought in the summertime. Why is that?

A: Soils in the Ozarks store 1.5 to 2.5 inches of water per foot of soil depth and lose about 0.25 inch per day through evaporation and plant use. Our shallow soils only absorb water at about 0.3 inch per hour in a rainstorm, so the rest is lost to runoff if it rains harder than that.

Q: What is a simple way to check if the soil needs water?

A: Push an 8-10 inch long screwdriver into the ground. If it goes in easily, soil moisture is adequate. Another sign is if footprints remain in grass after it is walked on. By the time you see plants wilting, it is past time to water.

Q: Lacking rainfall, how much water should be applied and when? How much do trees need?

A: Apply about one inch of water per week. Use a rain gauge or shallow straight-sided cans (like tuna fish cans) to measure the amount applied. Apply the water early in the morning to reduce evaporation and plant diseases. For trees, measure crown diameter in feet, square that number and divide by 2. That's how many gallons of water the tree needs per week. Add polyacrylamide (PAM) crystals to the soil when planting to extend the watering frequency.

Q: What are good ways to apply water slowly to young trees and container plants?

A: Use a soaker hose and turn on the faucet until the water seeps from the hose wall (no geysers). Or use 5-gallon buckets or empty milk jugs with a tiny hole drilled in the bottom. A 5/64" hole will apply water at 2 gallons per hour and a 1/8" hole will apply water at 5 gallons per hour.

Q: I'm sure Extension Centers have information on lawn and garden watering. How do they get in touch with you?

A: People can contact their county University of Missouri Extension Center and ask for MU Guide G6720 Home Lawn Watering Guide and G6912 Water-Efficient Gardening and Landscaping, Or contact me at the Webster County Extension Center at 417-859-2044, or visit our website at <http://extension.missouri.edu/webster>.

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