# Best Watering Practices for Culverhouse Community Garden

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The Culverhouse Community Gardeners are committed to demonstrating and utilizing the best practices of organic gardening. These practices include soil and water conservation as well as composting, mulching, and eschewing pesticides.

**A. Watering Garden Plots:**

1) Though the garden soil looks dry, poke your finger into the soil and feel for moisture. If you can feel moisture, your plants can too. **Or use the garden's Moisture Meter, located in the shed. Most mulched plants need to be watered only every 3-4 days in the dry season.**

2) Temporary wilt during the heat of the midday is natural and not harmful to the plant. Water to prevent permanent wilting between watering intervals.

3) When planting seeds, water gently and sparingly. Do not water again until sprout is visible. There is sufficient moisture in the soil. Over-watering will result in seed rot.

4) DO NOT water the entire soil surface of your plot. This encourages surface feeder roots that will die and stress the plant every time the top thin layer of soil dries out.

5) Water the roots, not the leaves or flowers. Deep watering will encourage roots to grow DOWN to reach nutrients from a larger volume of soil. Replenished by our normal rainfall, the soil 1 to 3 feet down remains damp.

6) Plant either on a flat plot surface or use shallow furrowing. Deep furrows are only appropriate for farming with irrigation. Planting on top of a 'hill' greatly increases the soil surface area and **increases** evaporation.

If opting for **shallow furrowed** planting, mulch thickly on the sides of the 'hills' to cut down on evaporation from sun and wind exposure.

7) Mulching around the plants creates microenvironments that trap moist air and **slow evaporation** from the leaves. It cuts down on erosion and slows evaporation from the soil surface. Mulch controls weeds and provides organic matter that supports the growth of bacteria and fungi needed to release minerals to the plant root system.

8) Remove plants in a timely manner once they have passed their productive period. Look at the root ball and see where the plant roots traveled for nutrients and water. Use this information for future planting and watering.

**B. Watering the Compost Piles:**

Over-watering the compost piles means your plot will lose out on many minerals and nitrogen. All that compost "tea" gets flushed out into the sand under the pile. The inside of your compost pile should be moist and steamy-hot, not wet and warm. Use a pitchfork to pry open the pile and assess the composting activity 6-8 inches below the surface. Over-watering will squelch the composting reaction.

**SHARE AND CONSERVE OUR WATER**