

Gardening During a Heatwave



We're currently experiencing another heatwave where I'm located and boy oh boy does it ever make gardening a real chore. I'm incredibly thankful that our home is equipped with A/C, but when the temperature reaches over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, I hate going outside even if I can cool down when I return inside.

We aren't the only ones suffering in the extreme heat. Pets are vulnerable during these scorches, *and* garden plants suffer, too. I find it incredibly tough to go outside, but it's in this scorching weather that my garden needs me the most! When it's this hot, plants wilt quicker and need more water than ever. I have to water twice a day to keep them from withering away. I have to provide them with shade – even the plants that love the heat! It's simply too hot for anything to

thrive. Production slows, as well. Blossom drop occurs, and I find myself harvesting fewer eggplants, tomatoes, and peppers. Bolt-resistant varieties of lettuce are not shooting up stalks like never before.

During a heatwave, there's plenty to do in the garden, even if I'm wary of stepping outside. Here are some tips to stay safe when gardening during a heatwave:

- **Drink water.** Don't just wait until you get back inside. You never know when a garden task might take longer than expected. Take a water bottle outside with you.
- **Garden in the early morning and late evening.** It may still be hot and humid, but at least you won't have to contend with the sun.
- **Save the heavy lifting for another day.** Unless it's a vitally important task, don't bother with sweat-inducing chores during a heatwave. Keep them for a cooler day. If you must do hard physical labor, avoid doing it during the hottest part of the day.
- **Wear a hat!** Even on cooler days! Keep your noggin' protected from harmful UV rays.
- **Slather on sunscreen.** Yes, even if you're only out for a few minutes. You may end up having a conversation with a neighbor finding yourself doing extra chores. Don't end up outside without sunscreen.
- **Take breaks.** It's that time of year when there's so much to do. Harvesting, succession sowing, and turning the compost pile. You can't merely put those tasks aside because of the weather, right? That's fine. If there's stuff you need to do, just be sure to take periodic breaks.
- **Listen to your body.** Keep tabs on how you're feeling. Getting dizzy? Are you feeling nauseous? Head inside to a cooler area. Don't risk heat sickness or heatstroke.

Are you worried about your plants during a heatwave? Keep them watered and avoid watering when the sun is out (water will

evaporate quickly, and wet leaves increase the chances of sunscald). Harvest at dawn or dusk to avoid stressing your plants. Harvesting in the heat will leave you with limp produce.

Watch the weather. Periods of severe heat and humidity are often accompanied by thunderstorms. Conserve water by strategically watering.

Remember, you can't control the weather! Don't feel like a failure if you incur losses during a heatwave.