

#GARDENING

How gardens can survive the heat wave

Just like humans, plants not only feel the heat, but can also get dehydrated and eventually stop growing. With rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and urban microclimates, keeping plants healthy takes consistent care and the right strategies.

This may come as a surprise to many, but any increase in temperature above 30 degrees Celsius can stunt plant growth. This is because the rate at which plants use the sun's energy to create carbs as a food source reduces when temperatures rise. In addition to this, the rate of respiration, or the rate at which the plants use up this food



than a year old and have not developed extensive root systems, it may be wise to water them more frequently during heat waves.

Are there additional substances we can add to soil to help with water retention?

Absolutely! Organic mulch, such as woodchips or compost, can help hold in water and reduce evaporation. It shades the soil and keeps the root zone cooler.

Should shades be introduced?

Of course! Bringing plants in containers to a shaded spot, away from direct sunshine, can help keep temperatures lower and reduce evaporation. Covering the plant(s) with 30-50 per cent shade cloth, screens, or even white sheets can help with the amount of light hitting plants directly and causing leaf burn.

What about fertiliser or propagation?

No to both! Fertilising in this heat will only speed up the growth process of a plant, which it cannot sustain without additional strain on itself. Propagation, or transplantation, should also not be prioritised in this weather as these activities are stressful on plants and take up a lot of their energy resources. In fact, removing dead leaves and flowers can often be a safer bet in this heat, so that the roots do not spend much-needed energy on spent flowers/fruits. This increases their chances of blooming again once the heat passes.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected



to grow, continues steadily even at these high temperatures. This means that food reserves are used faster in higher temperatures. Plants also suffer when they end up releasing more water vapour into the atmosphere than they are able to take in through their roots. In cases of prolonged periods of extreme heat, plants can die from food and water depletion.

Can changing watering techniques help?

Yes! One should check soil moisture daily. If the soil feels dry up to finger length, it is time to give your plants a drink. However, watering plants at certain times

is better than at others. Early mornings and late afternoons are generally cooler and may help plants retain the water that would otherwise evaporate in the harsh glare of the noon sun.



Avoiding sprinklers and choosing to spot-water plants is a good way to ensure that enough hydration is reaching your green friend. Soaker hoses and drip irrigation techniques also help to water plants effectively.

If your green buddies are in hanging containers, they may dry out faster and require more water, often up to two times a day. Similarly, if your plants are less

#LIFEHACKS

Stuck in traffic? Here's how to prevent heat exhaustion

As temperatures keep soaring in our beloved city, sitting in the already annoying traffic becomes more and more uncomfortable. With most public transport lacking proper ventilation or shade, here are a few tips to help you stay cool while stuck in traffic.

Why does heat feel worse in traffic?

Three things make the heat stress worse when you are stuck on a crowded bus, in a CNG, or tied to the back of a bike. The engine's heat comes from a lot of cars parked close by, the heat coming off the asphalt roads, and the lack of airflow.

What actually works? Cooling hacks backed by science

Experts recommend a combination of hydration, wardrobe alterations, and a few other little changes that are guaranteed to give.

Hydration is key

Experts recommend carrying a litre of cold water in an insulated bag so that the water remains cool. Resist the urge to chug and instead take small sips every 10-15 minutes. Adding salt or a pack of ORS is a better strategy if you stay out for prolonged periods of time. If using



ORS, always prepare according to package instructions.

The wet cloth trick

Occupational hazard researchers recommend placing a wet cloth behind the ears, neck, or wrists due to the abundance of major blood

vessels. Cooling these areas in turn cools the entire body.

Research has found that placing a damp cloth over the neck or behind the ears, as well as wiping wrists and the temples, provides a significant cooling effect on the body. To do this, keep a spare cloth with you and dampen it with water. Repeat as needed.

Clothing colour matters

Scientists found that wearing lighter shades, such as white and yellow, keeps you much cooler as opposed to wearing colours like black. The reason being, lighter shades reflect heat, whereas darker colours absorb it. Loose-fitting clothes are a bonus, and stacking these two really helps.

Time your casual hangouts

Scheduling your casual hangouts and meetings with friends and family is likely to protect you from the sun and heat. As the temperature falls after sunset, commuting at that time is likely to expose you to less harsh heat.

Bottom line

While the heat is unbearable and the commute is unavoidable, it is necessary to take precautionary steps to reduce the risk of heatstroke or severe dehydration. The research is detailed: strategic hydration, active cooling methods, smart clothing, and timing choices can protect your health. Your commute doesn't have to be a medical emergency.

Start today, and your body will thank you later.

By Zawad Arif Arian
Photo: Star