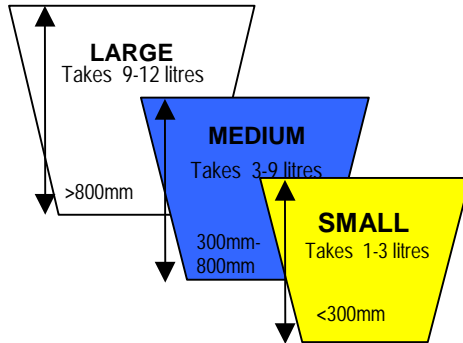


CONTAINERS, SOIL AND WATER

- The amount of soil in a container determines the amount of water required to saturate it.



- A small container (height <300mm) holds between 1-3 litres of water at saturation.
- A medium container (height 300mm-800mm) holds between 3-9 litres of water at saturation.
- A large container (height >800mm) holds between 9 to 20 litres of water at saturation.
- The soil acts as a reservoir of water to sustain plant to prevent wilting.
- Soils have different capacities for holding water. Sand and loam allows free drainage of water. Clay has a greater ability to hold water.



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WATER MANAGEMENT FOR OUTDOOR CONTAINERS



Understanding the basics...



PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A plant requires a minimum amount of water to prevent wilting.
- Physical elements such as humidity, variation in light, wind, and soil properties all have an impact on the amount of water a plant will require to prevent wilting.
- The two water conditions which need to be avoided are continued saturation and excessive dryness.

SATURATION & EXCESSIVE DRYNESS

Saturation of the plant is caused by applying more water than is necessary. Saturation is prevented by adequate drainage & measured watering.

Excessive dryness is caused by not applying water to the plant when it is required.

SIGNS THAT THE SOIL IS TOO WET

- Signs that indicate the soil is too wet (usually from continued saturation) include plant stem rot (stem turns soft and brown), tips of leaves turn brown, recurving of foliage, brown spots on upper surface of leaves (sometimes with a yellow halo around them).

SIGNS THAT THE SOIL IS TOO DRY

- When the soil becomes excessively dry any water placed onto the soil will be deflected off the surface and will run down the side of the pot out through the drainage holes. The inner core of the soil will remain dry.
- Signs that indicate the soil is too dry include the dropping of older foliage, yellowing of the older foliage, wilting and collapse of the entire plant, desiccation of leaves; tips turn brown, death to the whole plant.

EFFECTIVE WATERING TECHNIQUE

- The object is to allow the plant to use the majority of available water before re-watering, whilst not allowing it to become excessively dry.
- Check soil physically with finger or by applying a dry bamboo spike to a depth of around 300mm. If there is moisture present in the soil the spike will change to a dark colour or moist clods may stick upon removal. If there is no moisture present in the soil the spike will not change colour and dust or dirt particles will be present upon removal.
- The best method of applying water is to use a watering can or a hose at **low pressure**.
- The absorption rate of the soil is less than immediate, therefore will require water over **two 1-3 minute intervals** spaced five minutes apart. The length of the watering will depend on the size of the container. Only by applying water in staggered intervals will you ensure that the natural resistance of the surface tension has been broken to allow penetration.