Excessive Heat and Your Garden

During excessively hot summer days it's not only humans that can suffer from heat stress. Your plants can suffer from heat stress as well, especially when there is an abrupt spike in the heat. Excessive heat and sun can result in scorched twigs and leaves, slow plant growth, reduce germination of the seeds, and discolor fruit and leaves. Excessive heat can also lead to the death of a plant.

With a little extra planning, your plants can survive the hot summer weather. There are a few steps you can take to help reduce heat stress in your plants. When it's really hot, we perspire to cool down our body temperature. In plants is transpiration. Plant transpiration increases in hot weather. So it's important to keep yourself and your plants hydrated in hot weather. Ideally, plants should be given a good watering prior to a predicted sudden heat spike to reduce the potential for heat stress.

Adding several inches of mulch around trees and plants will help the soil maintain moisture. It also helps cool tree and plant roots. Plus, there's the added benefit of weed suppression!

Suspending shade cloth or some other fabric above the plants to provide them with shade during extreme heat. And remember to try to stay in the shade if you must do a limited amount of yard work during extreme heat.

Don’t fertilize plants or trees during hot weather. Fertilizers increase the plant’s growth. An increase in growth means an increase in water and nutrient needs. Plants have a hard time pumping water to all parts of the plant during the heat.

Water trees deeply and frequently. You want to consider the roots below the ground and encourage a network of deep roots.

Wait to introduce new plants or trees until the fall. Timing is everything. New plants, have smaller root systems than mature plants and need time to develop.

A good general rule of thumb is during extreme heat, take precautions to protect both yourself and your plants from heat stress!

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