

# Conservation in the Garden

*Adapted from Sunset Magazine, May 1991, page 31.*

## **Adjust watering schedules.**

Let the weather be your guide for watering frequency.

**Build watering basins.** They direct water right to the roots of shrubs and small trees—it's perfect for tomatoes during summer, too.

**Water efficiently when using a hose.** Use a hose-end shutoff valve and turn off the water as you move the hose from plant to plant.

**Maintain sprinklers.** Clean clogged sprinkler heads. Replace broken sprinklers or risers. Adjust them so their spray doesn't wet pavement.

**Install drip irrigation where possible.** It's the most efficient way to get water to roots without any waste. Periodically check drip systems for clogged or broken tubing.

**Control runoff on slopes.** Put headers or basins downslope from plants.

**Promote deep root development.** Watering plants with infrequent, deep soakings promotes plants to develop their roots mass deep in the soil so they require less water over time.

**Irrigate early or late in the day.** From evening through dusk, evaporation is minimal.

**Mulch.** Materials such as ground bark, compost, or leaf mold spread on the soil surface keep soil cooler, reduce evaporation, and discourage weed growth. Under big trees, let fallen leaves or needles accumulate as natural mulch.

**Pull weeds, or hoe them.** Left to grow, they compete with ornamentals for the limited water.

**Repair leaks.** Fix dripping faucets and bad hose connections.

**Sweep driveways and paths.** Use a broom rather than a hose spray to clean them off.

**Irrigate with saved water.** Water some of your plants with saved water from the kitchen or bathroom (vegetable-washing water and cool water that ran through the faucet or shower head before hot water hit the tap).

**Time watering carefully.** If your irrigation system isn't automated, set a kitchen timer to remind you when to turn it off.

## **Water cane berries**

**sparingly.** After harvest—especially in our coastal climate—established berry plants can get through summer with no additional water.

**Fertilize wisely.** Don't feed established trees or shrubs chemical fertilizers since it stimulates new growth, which demands more water. Instead, feed all of your plants with tilled-in compost, which increases the water holding capacity of the soil and provides nutrients.

**Check for underground leaks during summer.** Walk around your yard during the dry season to check for damp areas of soil. Underground pipes can break due to disturbance, age, and weather. If you notice a damp spot, you might need a plumber to investigate below the surface.

