



WATERING YOUR GARDEN

Watering with the irrigation system: Garden guide

Watering your garden is quick and easy. Follow these steps to ensure that your garden is watered properly and it will thrive!

Note: If you are watering very young seedlings or seeds that have not yet sprouted, watering with a hose and spray nozzle will be more effective. Use the drip irrigation system once your plants are several weeks old and have grown several leaves.

Step 1: Understanding Your Drip Irrigation System

The three parallel irrigation lines in your Learning Garden slowly release water directly to plants' roots beneath the soil surface through drip emitters. This watering technique will not wet the entire soil surface. Instead, water from the drip irrigation will seep into the soil below the surface to reach all of the plant's roots. The irrigation system will need to be hooked up to the nearest water source by hoses and a hose splitter.



Step 2: Test Soil Moisture

Before you turn on your drip irrigation system, you will want to test the soil moisture level. Do this in several different locations.

Test the soil moisture level by digging a small hole in the soil with your finger, approximately 1-2 inches deep. Assess the moisture level with your finger. Ideally, you want the soil to be damp (not soaked or dry). Test the soil in several different places to assure you get an accurate reading.

Step 3: Attach the Irrigation Hoses

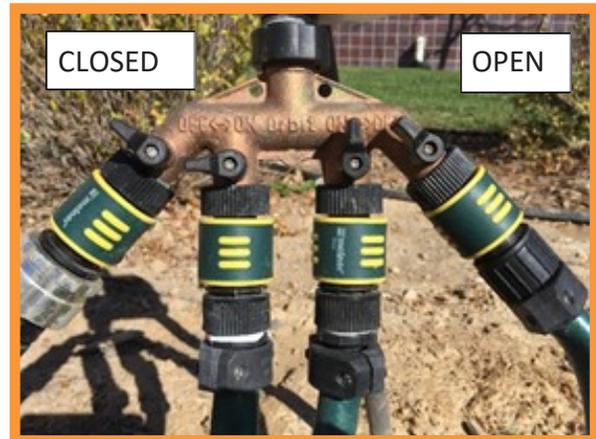
Attach the hose splitter to your water source. This may include a length of hose between the splitter and the water source.

Attach the smaller hose sections from your hose splitter to the irrigation hook-up on the garden beds. These should snap together easily by pushing the ends of the quick connect pieces together. Ensure each section of hose is securely attached throughout the entire system before you turn the water on.



Step 4: Turn on the Water

Turn on the water at your spigot. Make sure the hose splitter is on the "open" setting (see diagram below). Walk through the garden to make sure the drip irrigation system is working and all the hoses are securely connected. To test if a drip irrigation line is working, simply find a drip emitter and cover it with your finger. You should feel a small amount of water pressure push back on your finger. If a hose disconnects anywhere in your system, it was not attached properly. Turn the water off before reconnecting.



Step 5: Ensure that the garden has been thoroughly watered

Recall that your drip irrigation system will not wet the surface of the soil; rather, it will water the soil below the surface. There are a few ways that you can be confident your garden has enough water:



1. Expect to run the water for 10 minutes in cooler climates, and 20-30 in high heat.
2. If water is running out the bottom of a bed, turn the irrigation off immediately.
3. Test the soil moisture in several locations as previously described. This will give you a good idea as to how well the water is absorbing into the soil.
4. Sources with higher water pressure will water more quickly than those with low pressure.

Step 6: Turn the water off, and put the hoses away

Once you've checked to make sure the garden has been thoroughly watered, return the irrigation equipment to its storage place. That's it! Thank you for helping your school community grow a beautiful, thriving, edible garden!



Please conserve water! If you are not actively watering the garden, shut off the faucet.