

Extension Notes

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

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Provide the Right Amount of Water to Summer Veggies

You might think vegetables will be the best quality only if they get adequate water throughout the growing season. It's important that you water vegetables well while they are being established and during flowering, but sometimes the best quality garden produce results when water is somewhat limited.

All vegetables need a good supply of soil moisture before and during flowering and during fruit development. For crops such as cabbage and broccoli, this period is during establishment and head development. One to two inches of water per week, in the form of natural rainfall or supplemental irrigation is enough for most vegetables during this time. For vegetables you continually harvest, such as eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, summer squash and green beans, it's important to keep an adequate supply of water to the plant. This ensures even soil moisture throughout the growing season, and it will keep plants productive longer. Consistent soil moisture on tomatoes will also help prevent blossom end rot and cracking of fruit.

You should withhold water from potatoes once the vines have begun to die. The tubers under the soil are entering dormancy at that time and excess water or fertilizer may cause regrowth or cracking of the potatoes, which makes them less suitable for storage.

Cucumbers will become bitter without a good supply of moisture throughout the entire growing season. On the other hand, melons will produce a sweeter fruit when they are kept drier once the fruit has reached about half of its expected final size. For melons, don't cut off water completely. Continue to provide one-half to one inch of water per week. Heavy rain or irrigation when the melons are nearly mature will dilute the fruits' sugar. Watermelons will reconcentrate the sugar if left on the vine a little longer. Muskmelons, however, are less apt to do this.

Okra tends to produce more leaves than pods when it's over watered, so try to keep these drought-tolerant plants on the dry side.

A layer of mulch in the vegetable row will help conserve moisture, reduce weed growth, and keep produce cleaner. Using black plastic film as a mulch has become standard in commercial vegetable production, but most backyard growers still prefer organic mulches such as straw, wood chips, composted leaves, or grass clippings.

For more information about home gardening, refer to the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment publication Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky at <https://tinyurl.com/muxrcbky>, or contact the Carter County Cooperative Extension Service. Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race,

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Upcoming Events:

- **Little Sandy Beekeepers Meeting** – Tuesday, June 4th at 6:30 PM- Guest Speaker: Rick Sutton
- **Hike & Learn** – Friday, June 7th @ 1:00 PM – Morehead State University Eagle Lake