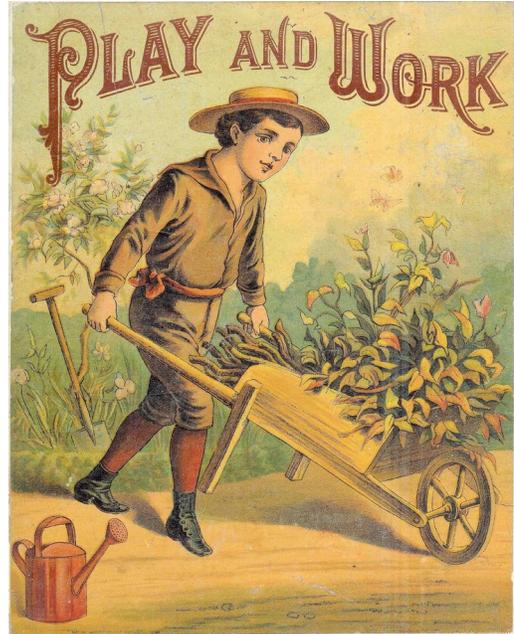


## The Hot Days of Summer

*Published 6/25/19 – Free download image titled “Play and Work” from clipart-library.com*

In what seems like just a couple of days we've transitioned from our unusually extended cool and wet spring to the typical hot days for this time of year. Along with the random hail event (sorry to all who lost some or all of their garden last week) the onset of hotter weather will affect plants in very different ways than what we've been experiencing so far this growing season.

Not only are vegetable gardens getting more daytime heat, the night time lows are slowly increasing, our days are at their longest, and each day each plant has more and more leaves – at least the ones the hail missed. Combined this means each plant will need more water than it did a week ago. A popular way to make sure you're not shorting a plant of it's needed water is to count while holding the hose under a plant. If before you counted to 3, maybe now you might have to count to 5. The bigger the plant or the bigger the pot, the higher the counting. The Pierre street wrap around baskets get a count of 10 in 6 different spots inside each pot.



Watering in the morning is much better than watering in the late afternoon or early evening. Plant water needs are highest during the day so having that water available to them at the start of the day is far better than allowing the plants to get increasingly very dry during the day. Several diseases such as blossom end rot in tomatoes are exacerbated by wide fluctuations in soil moisture. Further, late day waterings create conditions favorable to the development of mildews and fungus as there is less time for leaves to dry before the cooler nighttime temperatures arrive.

With very few exceptions, watering at the base of a plant is much better than overhead watering. Soaker hoses, drip lines, or hand held hoses with wand attachments are all easy ways to avoid getting water on the leaves where, again, conditions become more favorable to the development of mildews and fungus. But remember, only water when the plants need it. Push a finger down 2” into the pot or ground. If it's dry, water, if it's not maybe hold off on watering until next time.

And now a few words about hail. No, probably not the words that come to mind for the unlucky folks who lost a lot in our recent hail storm, but instead a few words about what to expect from what's left. Most annual flowers, perennials, shrubs, and trees will be just fine. If a tomato or pepper had been in the ground a while and was able to develop a big root structure, there's a good chance they'll sprout new leaves and resume production. These plants will be bushier than normal as they just got an unexpected trimming. Leafy vegetables like lettuce will probably rebound the easiest unless root crops like radish and potatoes give them a run for first place. Now all of this recovery does cost time and we don't have a lengthy growing season. Apples bruised by the hail should be fine but not look so great, especially if the skin was not broken. All we can do is wait and see how the season progresses. Good luck!

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