Better Watering

As well as the RHS guidance at https://www.rhs.org.uk/vegetables/watering, here are some tips to make better use of both water and your time.

**Firstly**

**Don’t water the leaves**

**X** fungal infections are more likely

**X** evaporation means a lot of the water is lost

**X** much of the water never gets to the roots

**X** it is a waste of your time!

Also don’t water a little at a time but remember that in hot weather, seedlings will need almost a daily water. Using the tips below you only need, at most, a couple of really good soakings each week. Then, once established, plant roots go down and don’t stay at the surface where they are more prone to drought. If in doubt, dig a hole a few inches deep and if it is moist, don’t water.

**So ...**

**Put the water where it is needed.**

1. **For squashes, courgettes, brassicas, sweet corn and any other ‘single’ vegetables**

* Dig out a shallow depression at least 8” (20cms) deep by about 12” (30cms) across and fork in well rotted compost or manure with a small handful of your favourite fertiliser. The top should be about 2” (5cms) under the normal soil level; the dug-out earth can go round the depression to form a dam. Put a large, up-turned plastic bottle with its base cut off next to where the plant is and water into the bottle so the water goes straight to the roots. Any excess water stays in the depression and doesn’t run off.
* For squashes, put a stick in to show where the plant is, because once the leaves all grow, you will have trouble finding where to water.
* Sweet corn can also be grown in bottomless plastic pots, about 12” (30cms) deep, with most of the pot above the soil level and filled with well rotted compost or manure with a small handful of your favourite fertiliser. This not only makes watering easier but also fools the mice because they can’t get at your cobs! You may be able to get large plastic pots for free from florists.

1. **For plants grown in rows such as onions, garlic, leeks, peas, beans, beetroot etc ...**

* Prepare a trench up to say 4” (10cms) wide by at least 8” (20cms) deep and (NOT for carrots), fork in well rotted compost or manure with a small handful of your favourite fertiliser. The top should be about 2” (5cms) under the normal soil level; the dug-out earth can go along the sides of the trench to form a dam. Seeds need low nutrient soil to germinate well, so top up the trench to about 1” under normal soil level with old potting or hanging basket compost (as long as it doesn’t have any pests in it). Water well and sow your seeds covering with a little of the compost. When they grow, watering along the trench concentrates the water to where the plants are.

1. **For potatoes**



Earth–up as normal but end up with a ‘shallow M’ shaped row. You can then direct water into the trough exactly where the tubers are growing.

**The maths of watering for the techie people out there** (I think the calculations are correct)

* 1 gallon (5 litres) in a 12” (30cm) diameter depression is the same as 2½” (7cms) of rain and of course it is concentrated where the roots are.
* 8 gallons (40 litres) along a 30’ (10 metre) trench, 4” (10cms) wide is the same as 1½” (4cms) of rain and again it is concentrated where the roots are.

**Some final thoughts**

* A hose may deliver anything between 1 and 5 litres a minute, depends on how many other hoses are being used, so a watering can is a better option to keep track of how much water you are putting on your plants.
* Also you can add feed more easily to a watering can and know that you are not wasting it.
* Remember never leave a hose running unattended on the soil; it will always move and start watering the weeds!
* And, of course, sprinklers are not allowed.