



LOOKING AFTER *your garden* IN PERTH

Just the right amount of water

There is no denying that all plants need water. The vexed question is “How much water do they need?”

Generally, the soil around the plant should be damp but not wet. The plant should have healthy new growth, be strong and upright with no signs of discolouration on the leaves.

The symptoms of overwatering and underwatering are very similar. In both instances, the lower leaves are yellow, the plant looks wilted, there is no new growth and the young leaves turn brown.

There are a couple of key difference between the symptoms of over and under watering. When over watered, the soil can appear green and the leaves, while brown, will be soft and limp. In under watering, there may be some roots showing at the surface, the soil can be cracked and dry and the brown leaves will be dry and crispy.

Many people kill their plants, particularly potted plants, with kindness. They water the plant, they see that it looks wilted, so they water again. It continues to wilt, they continue to water and eventually the plant dies.

It is important to water only when the soil is dry. The best way to check is to push a finger down into the soil and check that it is damp. If it feels moist but not wet, that’s perfect. If it is dry then the plant needs watering.

If the plant is in a pot and it dries out completely, the soil can contract around the root system and a gap forms between the soil and the pot. Water runs down between the soil and the pot, and the plant can’t take up any moisture. If this happens, the soil needs to be rehydrated.

Put the pot and plant into a bucket or sink filled with water. Usually, air bubbles rise to the surface. Leave the pot in the water until the bubbles stop and the soil is completely wet. Drain the water and then check the soil regularly to make sure it remains damp but not wet.