



# Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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## One Drip At A Time

**Carolyn Utter, Editor & Johnson's Marketing Director**

As a passionate gardener, one of my most enjoyable tasks is topping off a morning jog with a trip around the landscape to water my potted plants. There's a tremendous amount of relaxation to be found at the business end of a garden hose during the early morning hours.

But as much as I enjoy this activity, watering outdoor potted plants and hanging baskets in the summer can be a burden. The wind and heat often dry out the soil faster than I can keep up. My limp, wilted plants cry for help. And there's not much relaxation for me when I'm watering plants in the blistering afternoon sun.

### *Drip is the Answer*

Not being one to give up without a fight, I decided last year to connect all my pots and hanging baskets to a RainDrip irrigation system and timer. What a difference! Now I just wish I'd done it sooner. The system is a simple line of 1/4" tubing with drippers at each pot; connected to a timer at my outdoor faucet. With the timer, my system runs whether I'm home or not, so no matter how busy the day has been, my plants never go thirsty and they continue to thrive even in the hottest of hot, windy summers.

If you'd like to learn how easy it is to put together a drip irrigation system, attend one of our "Got Drip?" seminars on June 24 (see below). In addition to containers, RainDrip is designed to work (with or without a timer) in all types of growing situations including vegetable gardens, flower beds, landscape beds ... even single trees.

### *The Soil's Little Helper*

To increase moisture retention, I also use Soil Moist in all my outdoor pots. This amazing little crystal holds a huge amount of water and releases it back to the plants as needed. Potting mix stays moist much longer. Plants are happier and grow better. Caution! A little goes a long way. Just 1.5 teaspoons of Soil Moist will absorb a full quart of water so don't overdo it!

### *Slow-Release Plant Food*

Much like drip irrigation provides a source of slow-release water, slow-release fertilizers are an easy way to keep plants fed. So I always add ferti•lome Start-N-Grow at planting time, too. I still use ferti•lome Blooming & Rooting (9-59-8) to help bring on lots of flowers, but with Start-N-Grow in the soil, I don't have to fertilize quite as often and it doesn't matter so much if I miss a time or two.

### *Better Late Than Never*

If your pots are still being hand watered ... and you haven't added Soil Moist or Start-N-Grow, don't fret. Both Soil Moist and Start-N-Grow can be added to pots after planting. Just work them into the soil as deeply as you can. And the RainDrip irrigation system is such a no-brainer that you can start or add to your system any time.

Now that I have pretty much eliminated the enjoyable task of hand watering, I have replaced it with other relaxing activities such as lounging on the deck in the morning with a cup of coffee and soaking up the view ... or taking a stroll around the garden to see "who" has decided to start blooming today. My plants are happier ... and I'm still happy, too. It's all good! ■