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ADVERTISING FEATURE

# HOME SWEET HOME

## Water rationing is a strong possibility this summer

*Soaker hoses and mulch can help you preserve water*

Water is one of those commodities we all take for granted.

The fact that water levels in Ontario are at the lowest ever is not good news for gardeners. It may shape up to be a very dry summer, with the possibility of water rationing.

However, there are many things a gardener can do to conserve moisture in the soil and cut down on water usage.

One of the best ways to conserve water is to use soaker hoses in all your gardens.

Soaker hoses lay on the ground and are pliable enough to twine around plants.

Water will seep slowly out of the hose and go directly into the soil where it is needed — not into the air or evaporated in the sunlight.

By not wetting the leaves of the plants, you'll also prevent many fungal diseases.

As added protection, cover the soil and the hose with a layer of mulch.

Studies have shown moisture can

be retained in the soil up to four times longer with mulch. This can translate into significant savings on your water bill and help to conserve our dwindling water supply.

Mulch can also be very attractive.

Pine bark nuggets, decorative stones or forest mulch all make visually appealing groundcovers.

Plants that creep along the ground, like ivy, vinca, ajuga, pachysandra or thyme (just to name a few), can also be used.

For vegetable gardens, use dried leaves and grass, straw, newspapers or any organic substance that will retain moisture in the soil.

I have found that mulching has significantly cut down on gardening chores, such as weeding and hoeing hard, compacted soil.

And, my reward comes at the end of the summer when I get my water bill.

### MANY BEAUTIFUL ANNUALS ARE NOW AVAILABLE

This is the time of year when we're all in a frenzy with our yards, gardens and decks.

Spring has finally arrived and we can't wait to get gardening and enjoy the outdoors.

In your rush to the local nursery, however, you should stop and take note of some of the different annuals being offered.

Breeding programs have been going on for years to produce annuals that perform quickly and beautifully in our hot, humid summers.

Many new varieties have come on the market in recent years and I have

been thrilled with their performance. Last year, I tried a new plant called Million Bells, a vine with tiny, petunia-like flowers.

It kept growing through sun, rain, drought and my neglect, right up until frost.

Many other plants in my yard had died off in the fall, but this beauty kept growing and producing flowers until a final, hard frost that finished it.

Other wonderful, new annuals

I have tried and been equally impressed with are bacopa, bidens, brachycome, wave petunias and osteospermum.

Many of these have been bred to be drought resistant and to continue growth and blossom production all summer.

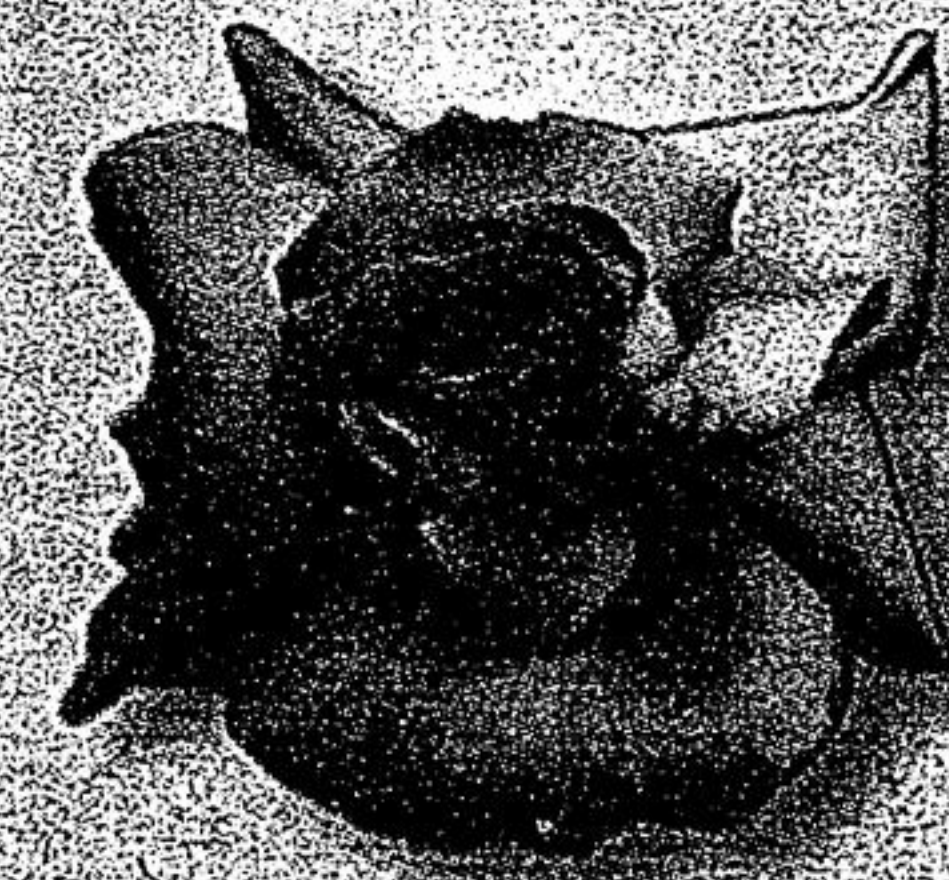
My experiences with these plants have been very positive and I incorporate them more and more into my summer planting.

So, be a little experimental this year. Use your favourite geraniums or marigolds, but also try some of those plants that you're not familiar with. You may be pleasantly surprised.

These articles were submitted by Charlie Dobbin, B.Sc. (Agr), a horticulturalist from White Rose Crafts & Nursery Sales Ltd.



Charlie Dobbin, from White Rose.



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