

The Watering Can



By **Beverly O'Keefe, URI Master Gardener**

Welcome to the Watering Can!

July is National Irrigation Month – but what does this mean to a Master Gardener? Here in Rhode Island summer outdoor water use doubles and even triples a family's water consumption placing increased stress on our watersheds, basins, and subbasins. Where do you get your water to irrigate? From a groundwater well, a river, or the public water supply? All water originates from rainfall.

Many people are confused about how much water is needed to sustain a garden or lawn during the summer months. In the past, many communities have imposed "odd/even" watering restrictions which has led people to think plants need watering every other day – even if it has rained. As Master Gardeners, we know too much rain or overwatering creates all types of gardening problems and diseases but what should be done to stop these poor irrigation practices? Recently, some communities have stopped "odd/even" watering in favor of "once a week" watering with exceptions for new plantings. For example, gardens and lawns only require one inch of water per week. Newly established plants require more frequent watering but this can be easily accomplished using "spot" watering with your garden hose or watering can.

Another sustainable watering practice is rainwater harvesting. One or several rain barrels, a cistern, or even a water tank can be used to collect rain from a roof or flat surface. On average, Rhode Island receives between 3-4 inches of rainfall each month. Did you know one inch of rain falling on a 1,000 square foot roof can generate 620 gallons of water? Harvesting rainwater is fun and sustainable.

Do your part to support National Irrigation Month – educate yourself on sustainable watering practices and harvest rainwater for your watering can.

The Rhode Island Water Lady