

right plant. right place.

Make smart plant choices to save water and have a thriving garden.

Determine the exposure.

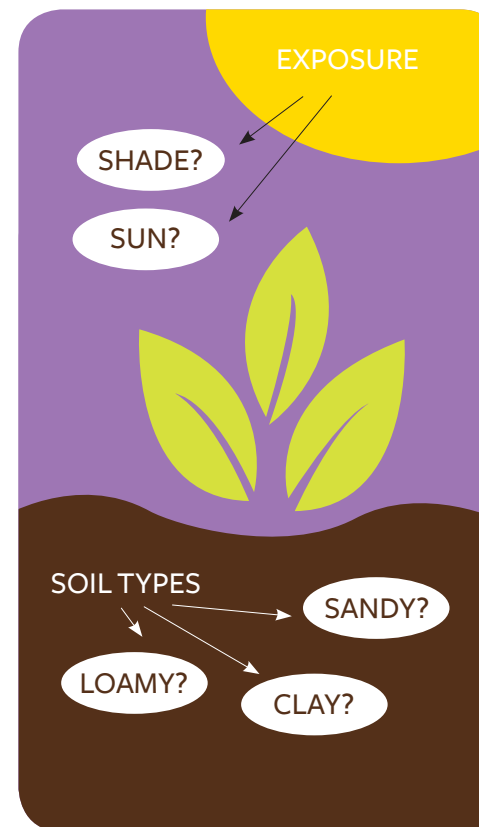
Do you have primarily sun or shade? Light can vary greatly depending on the time of day, the season and whether it is filtered or completely blocked.

- **Sunny** areas get six or more hours of full sun, resulting in warm, dry soil. If plants are also exposed to wind, they will lose even more moisture.
- **Shady** areas are under trees or eaves or against north-facing walls. Moreover, these areas can be especially dry if tree roots are competing for moisture or when eaves block rainfall year round.

Know your soil.

Pick up a handful of moist soil and squeeze. Rub it between your fingers.

- **Sandy soil** has the largest particles and feels gritty. This soil is loose, drains easily and dries out fast.
- **Clay soil** has the smallest particles. It feels smooth like flour and holds together like Silly Putty. When wet, this soil is heavy, sticky and often soggy. In winter, it can get waterlogged, causing some plants to rot. In summer, it can be hard to dig into. Clay soil holds onto nutrients and water better than sandy soil.
- **Loamy soil** is a mix of sand, silt, clay and organic matter (decomposed plants, compost or manure). This soil is usually loose, drains well and holds onto moisture and nutrients.



Why does it matter?

When you match the right plants to the right environment, your plants grow stronger roots and are healthier, which in turn requires less watering, reduces or eliminates the need for pesticides, and makes plants more resilient to disease and harsh weather.

By using less water, you also help protect salmon. Summer and early fall are especially critical times to conserve when salmon-bearing rivers are at their lowest.

Test your drainage.

Understanding how your soil drains is critical to choosing the right plants and knowing how to water them. If soil drains too quickly, plants may not have a chance to absorb enough moisture, so you will need to water more often. And if soil drains too slowly, plants may actually suffocate or rot, especially during our wet winters.

Test your soil drainage by digging a hole six inches wide and one foot deep, then fill to the top with water and let it drain. A post hole digger works well for this job. When the water has drained completely, fill the hole again. This time keep track of how long it takes for the water to drain completely from the hole.

- **If the water drains within three hours or less,** you probably have sandy soil.
- **If water is still standing in the hole after eight hours,** you probably have clay soil. It will be important to choose plants that don't need good drainage.
- **If the water drains within four to six hours,** you have good drainage and can choose a variety of plants.

Choose the right plants and group them together.

Once you know the sun, shade, soil and drainage conditions of your yard, you can choose the right plants. Check with your local nursery for what is available and for plant combination ideas. Be sure to group these new plants with plants that need the same conditions. This will greatly simplify your watering routine.

Protect plants with mulch.

Spread two to three inches of compost, grass clippings, fall leaves or woodchips around new plants. Mulch will hold in moisture, provide nutrients and prevent weeds.


Water until established.


Plants take one to three years to develop sufficient roots to thrive on their own. Even "drought tolerant" or "native" plants need summer water the first few years. Some plants will still need occasional water after three years during our driest months. **Read our factsheet: "Watering: Start New Plants Off Right."** Find it online at savingwater.org or ask nursery staff.



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