

## OL 305 Assignment Six Discussion

Online Learning: OL 305

The Urban Garden: A Small Vegetable Garden for Family Food & Nutrition

Center for Sustainable Development: <https://nonprofit.csd-i.org/urban-garden-vegetable-garden-family-food-nutrition/>

**How to Grow Food in the City.** How your nonprofit can start a small space vegetable garden program: Fresh vegetables for at-risk urban families.

### This week's resources:

OL 305 Assignment Six Homework Instructions

OL 305 Assignment Six Discussion

**Discussion 6.** Learning how to gauge sun and water.

**This Week's Goal:** To get a sense of how frequently you need to water.

Hot, direct sun for a full day can be hard on plants. Soil dries out, plants wilt.

This week we're going to break this discussion up and to two different sections. 1) watering seed trays with young seedlings. 2) watering more mature plants in containers.

### 1. Watering seed trays with young seedlings.

Although I've been raising plants on my rooftop for a number of years I continue to learn—sometimes the hard way. Recently I read some information on using coconut fiber (coir) instead of peat moss. So I bought a couple of bags and began using it in my seed trays for planting my seeds. There are so many moving parts when you're growing plants I'm not sure what this specific problem was—however, I had lower germination rates and lower survival rates for seedlings in the seed trays with coir.



Typically when I plant seeds in seed trays I start them in a partially enclosed space that has mixed sun and shade. When they're getting closer to the age of planting in a container I will take them up to the roof and let them begin to acclimate.

I haven't had a problem with this before but recently I took several seed trays to the roof and a number of the seedlings died in the first day. I suspect that it had something to do with the coir planting medium—but I can't be 100% certain of that.

So what I needed to do was to shade the seed trays for part of the day and then remove the shade for part of the day sleeping for use of the sun. The salvage to the rest of my seedlings all the acclimated to the sunny rooftop.

Because of this new problem I just purchased some peat moss to replant the seedlings that died and I'll see if this works better. [15 June 2020: I will update you in 6 weeks].

But, my suggestion to you is to ease your seedlings into the sun as their growing.

	<p>I use a handheld watering can with a gentle spray to water my seed trays every day.</p> <p>I also place my seed trays in a rimmed oven pan. I can fill it with water so the seed trays can pull water up from the bottom as well. This way the seedlings never dry out.</p> <p>I can also mix a little chicken manure into that water to give the seedlings an extra boost of nutrients.</p> <p>You can see this in the photo on the right.</p>	
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### In Summary.

Watch your seed trays very carefully. Make sure that they stay moist. Place them in partial sun depending upon your local situation.

### 2. Watering containers with more mature plants.

I haven't observed that containers with more mature plants are as sensitive as seedlings in seed trays.



Sometimes when I transfer and plant small seedlings into containers I will provide a little shade for a week or so. My hack: a chair works very well for this. Placed over a container it can provide shade during the heat of the day.

But once the plants have acclimated to the container they have full sun on my rooftop. They seem to do fine. I have added coarse coconut fiber to my soil mix which should help hold water. Some times of the year I only need to water every other day. As we are in full summer right now I need to water every day.



I ran a hose from a ground level garden water tap up the two stories to the roof. I connected the hose to a second water tap on the roof where I have a second hose for watering. Very simple installation. I use an inexpensive, plastic fan spray water nozzle—with a gentle spray. So with this "piped in" water I can water my whole rooftop garden in under 10 minutes.

Edward C Smith in his great book "[Incredible Vegetables from Self Watering Containers](#)" focuses on self watering containers which basically have a small reservoir of water at the bottom of the container. He says in his book that there were times when he was having to water his vegetable containers two times a day so he shifted over to these self watering containers.

### Shade.

You will need to experiment with this based upon your local conditions. Some plants—such as lettuces and other cool weather plants—will benefit from partial shade.

Other plants—such as chili peppers— will benefit from full sun.

Take your time and enjoy the learning process!

### In summary, here are several ideas:

1. In your first year of growing inner-city vegetables, watch, listen and observe. Through this process you will learn about sun, shade, and water.
2. Shade can be developed from a permanent structure like an overhead lattice. An overhead lattice can also be fun to sit under when it's hot!
3. Shade can also be developed from temporary, movable things like umbrellas and chairs.