

UNDERSTANDING **WETTING AGENTS**

You may have heard of wetting agents but don't quite understand what they do. The main purpose of wetting agents is to increase the free flow of water throughout the soil profile for your lawn and your gardens.

Water resistant or hydrophobic soils are those soils where the dispersment of water is uneven meaning that some areas get enough water while other get very little. They may also have soil that is coated with a waxy type of substance which makes the soil resist the flow of water. Water resistant soil will also push the water down deeper into the water table faster than usual equating to the lawn needing far more water than is typical.

For hydrophobic or water resistant soils the application of wetting agents aids in breaking down the waxy coating, allowing the soil to more freely absorb, disperse and hold onto the water. This will result in more even coverage of the water and less dry patches of lawn. The end result will be less water left sitting on the top of the lawn to be evaporated, water won't be so quickly forced away from the top soil, and an overall healthier lawn.



Wetting agents can also be of benefit to soil that hold onto too much water. With the application of wetting agents, water will again flow more freely, allowing the water to drain away from the top soil more easily instead of becoming trapped.

There are limitations to how much a wetting agent can achieve. If your soil is heavily clay based then the soil may need more than just a wetting agent – the soil may need to be permanently improved for drainage by being blended with coarse sand or even removed altogether and replaced with a sandy loam.

How Often to Use Wetting Agents

Included in your normal lawn care regimen – wetting agents are best applied twice a year; in Autumn and Spring. If your soil has minimal issues with water retention, once a year may be all that is required. If your lawn have severe problems, wetting agents can also be applied in Summer.

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Application and Safety

Unlike fertilisers that can cause toxicity if applied too frequently or in too large an amount, wetting agents present no such risk.

While they won't cause in problems, applying them too frequently is a waste of money – once they have done their job there is nothing more that can be achieved.

Measure your lawn and follow the manufacturer's recommendations for application. Wetting agents can be applied using a fertiliser spreader or by hand. The best rule is to apply moderately; you will receive the best results without wasting money by applying unneeded product.

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