

## Rain

We have survived the longest, greyest, wettest monsoon season in quite some time. How has it affected gardens and landscapes around Southern Nevada - the new “Emerald Isle” of the Mojave?

Even with all that rain, Lake Mead’s problems are not over. Water levels had been down, at one point, to 100 feet below normal. It has come up a bit from that low point, but adding a few inches of rain will not make all that much difference. Four inches is a fraction of what we need. The big determinant of Lake Mead’s water level is the snow that falls in the Rocky Mountains, feeding the Colorado River, which in turn feeds the lake.

That is not to say the rain had no effect.

Plants thrive with additional water, as long as they are not flooded and excess drains away quickly. Among the plants that we will probably be seeing are all the weeds we removed earlier. They take advantage of any additional resources, like extra rainfall.

Spot the sow thistles; they look like dandelions. When they bloom, they produce multiple dandelion-like flowers, with similar seeds. Remove them as soon as you see leaves. Save yourself trouble later.



Wet soil will also probably mean prostrate spurge. This is a very low, spreading plant, with about ¼ inch leaves that may have a red patch. It grows all around, but especially when there is surplus water. When you see it, pull it.

With weeds, eternal vigilance is the key. That goes for any weeds that emerge, whether in your vegetable garden or your rock mulch. The younger they are, the easier they are to control: smaller

roots are anchoring them in the ground. Early removal also means less nutrition being stolen from the plants you want. For assistance identifying a weed, call the Master Gardener help line.

With this additional water, plants of all sorts will be growing more rapidly, including the ones we do want – trees, shrubs, vegetables. They need all available nutrients to stay healthy. This is the reason we amend the soil regularly, to improve fertility levels, which tend to be very low.

All the rain makes it likely that essential nutrients have been leached out of the soil, resulting in plant stress, a bad thing as we go into autumn. This is when plants are normally accumulating whatever they can to survive winter. Yes, winters in most of Southern Nevada may not be harsh, but winter is never a period of balmy weather. Plants need to be healthy, but not growing so fast that they'll be tenderer, more vulnerable to chilling.

Plants are growing rapidly with all the rain, but the extra nutrients they need have probably been washed out. The soil needs fertilization, but I would not suggest a high nitrogen fertilizer. This is one of the many times for amending soils with compost, or watering with compost tea. Compost is the best thing for soil and plants, especially when a slow steady, supply of nutrients is needed – like now.

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