

➔ Tried & tested / Water-retention gels

Cheap exotics
How to grow tropical plants
from seed **Page 13**

www.gardennewsmagazine.co.uk



HozeLOCK Water Storing Gel

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 7.5ml per 15cm pot/1.3-litres of compost
Price guide 500ml £9.99



THE BEST CHOICE FOR QUICK RESULTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY

J Arthur Bower's Water Storing Crystals

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 5ml per 4-litres of compost
Price guide blister card £2.89; 150g £4.49



Thompson & Morgan SwellGel

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 5g per 15cm pot/1.3-litres of compost
Price guide 1kg £17.49



Scotts Miracle-Gro Moisture Control Gel

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 10g per 10-litres of compost
Price guide 250g £5.10



Plant Watering RainGel

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 7.5ml per 15cm pot/1.3-litres of compost
Price guide 250g £6.77; 1kg £15.64



Westland Water Saving Gel

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 2.5g per 15cm pot/1.3-litres of compost
Price guide 250g £3.99



Gardman Watergel

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 5g per 5-litres of compost
Price guide 15g 79p; 125g £1.99; 250g £2.99; 500g £5.49; 1kg £9.99



Botanico Water Magic

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 5g per 5-litres of compost
Price guide: 150g £2.99; 500g £4.99

Suppliers

- Botanico 01905 791984, www.botanicogarden.co.uk
- Supplies direct to garden centres & stores
- Gardman 01406 372227, www.gardman.co.uk
- Supplies direct to garden centres & stores
- HozeLOCK 0121 313 1122, www.hozeLOCK.com
- J Arthur Bower's from William Sinclair 01522 537561, www.william-sinclair.co.uk
- Plant Watering 0161 274 1080, www.plant-watering.com
- Scotts Miracle-Gro 0845 190 1881, www.lovethegarden.com
- Thompson & Morgan 0844 248 5383, www.thompson-morgan.com
- Westland Horticulture 0870 066 3566, www.gardenhealth.com

Make it a stress free summer!

Geoff Hodge tests water-retention gels to see which are the best for helping to beat water stress this summer

TO MAKE sure plants grow well and perform to their best, they need a constant supply of water. The emphasis is 'constant', otherwise they become stressed when water is in short supply or when alternating between being soaked and then bone dry. Plants in containers are the most susceptible to water shortages, but so are shallow-rooted shrubs, such as conifers, hydrangeas and camellias. You can help plants through these stressful times and reduce water wastage by using a water-retention gel. Supplied as dry granules,

they absorb and store water, acting as tiny reservoirs until the plants need it. But which ones are the best? They not only need to store the water, but they need to absorb it quickly to make the most of added water - whether it's rainfall or when you water - and then release it to the plants. Regular and correct feeding is also essential, and plants can only take up nutrients in solution - dry soil/compost means they can't take up the nutrients, no matter how much you add. So some suppliers also provide a gel and feed, which contains a controlled-release fertiliser that slowly releases nutrients to the plants.

The test
 I added 5g of the dry crystals to 200ml of water in a beaker and timed how quickly they turned completely to gel. I then 'planted' a Surfinia petunia in each of the gels. The plants lasted for eight days in a warm room, before the gels needed re-watering. Although not an exhaustive or long-term test, all the gels seemed to release water to the plants when they needed it - I couldn't find any real difference between them. The application rates quoted are for dry weight of the granules and are the rates recommended by the supplier.

➔ Gel & feeds

These are a combination of a water-retention gel and a controlled-release fertiliser that slowly release nutrients over six months. As you might expect, those plants fed with nutrients generally did better than those in the straight gel, without nutrients

Gardman Nutrigel

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 15g per 6-litres of compost
Nutrients: NPK 12-12-12 + trace elements
Price guide: 250g £3.49



Plant Watering Rain Gel & Feed

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 7.5ml per 15cm pot/1.3-litres of compost
Nutrients: NPK 10-11-18 + trace elements
Price guide 150g £4.46; 500g £7.03



Thompson & Morgan EasyFeed

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 5ml per 15cm pot/1.3-litres of compost
Nutrients: NPK 12-3-8 + trace elements
Price guide 160g £5.49; 300g £9.99



Scotts Miracle-Gro Moisture Control Plant Food & Gel

Initial water-absorption speed ★★★★★
Plant growth ★★★★★
Application rate 20ml per 10-litres of compost
Nutrients: NPK 11-8-11
Price guide 250g £5.10

