



23rd June 2025

## **British Garden Centres' essential guide to drought resilient gardening in a heatwave**

**Britain's gardens have faced a spring like no other. By the end of May, the UK had seen just 80.6mm of rain, which is less than half the seasonal average and the lowest total for this time of year in over a century, breaking a record that had stood since 1852. This unusually low rainfall, combined with a long heatwave, has put a lot of stress on gardens across the country. With many parts of the UK currently in drought, plants, lawns, and soil are struggling to cope with the dry conditions, but the team at British Garden Centres has put together some simple, practical advice to help gardens survive and stay healthy during this tough time.**

### **Garden beds**

Borders and flowerbeds are vulnerable during hot weather because the soil dries out quickly. One of the best ways to help plants in borders is by using mulch. Mulch is a protective layer placed on top of the soil and can be made from organic materials like bark, compost, or straw, or decorative stones, slate and gravel. Mulching helps keep moisture in the soil by reducing evaporation and protects your plant roots from heat during the warm, dry weather.

Gravel and small stones are especially useful because they allow water to filter through in wetter months while conserving moisture in summer. Bark chippings are an excellent mulch for hot, dry conditions because they hold moisture after watering and shield roots from the sun, preventing them from getting scorched. Slate chippings are another option that can help keep soil cooler during hot weather, which reduces stress on plants and helps the soil hold moisture longer.

### **Containers**

Plants grown in containers, window boxes and hanging baskets need special attention during drought because pots dry out faster than garden soil. Choosing the right compost is important, and we recommend a loam-based compost because it holds moisture better than lighter mixes. Adding a layer of pebbles, bark chippings, or gravel on top of your pots can help slow down water loss and protect roots from heat. When watering container plants, it is better to water deeply but less often. This encourages roots to grow deeper and become more drought-tolerant, and by watering early in the morning or late in the evening, this will help to reduce water lost to evaporation. Using light-coloured pots made from non-porous materials can also help keep the soil cooler and moister. If your plants are crowded in small pots, consider moving them into larger containers to give roots more space to grow and provide a



23rd June 2025

bigger reservoir of moisture. Grouping pots in a shady part of the garden can create a cooler microclimate that reduces evaporation and helps plants stay hydrated longer.

### **Drought resilient plants**

A dry, hot summer does not mean your garden has to lose its colour or charm. Many plants are naturally adapted to survive in dry conditions and can bring beauty to your garden even during the driest period for the UK.

Mediterranean herbs like **lavender, rosemary, sage, thyme, and oregano** are great choices because they have thick, waxy leaves that reduce water loss. Lavender has silver-coloured leaves with tiny hairs that reflect sunlight and protect the plant from drying out. Other drought-tolerant plants include **ornamental grasses, succulents, and plants with bulbs or tubers**. These plants often store water in their leaves or underground, allowing them to survive long dry spells and regrow when the rain returns.

**Agapanthus, eryngium, euphorbia, gaura, and sedum** are all excellent choices for dry garden conditions.

Agapanthus offers striking flowers on tall stems and requires minimal watering after establishment. Eryngium, or sea holly, features spiky blue bracts that attract pollinators and thrives in full sun with very little water. Euphorbia is a resilient evergreen that grows well in dry, well-drained soils, including shaded spots, while Gaura produces delicate flowers and uses long taproots to access water in arid soils. Sedum, a succulent perennial, stores water in its thick leaves and stems, making it exceptionally drought-tolerant. It thrives in full sun and well-drained, often poor soils, providing long-lasting seasonal interest with minimal care and attracting bees and butterflies.

### **Lawns**

When the soil dries out and there isn't enough water, grass blades turn brown. This doesn't mean the grass is dead; it is simply dormant, conserving energy until conditions improve. During this time, do not mow your lawn as cutting dry, dormant grass can cause damage and stress the lawn further. Once the rain returns, lawns usually recover and turn green again.

Some types of grass are better at surviving dry spells because they have been bred or naturally adapted to cope with less water. These grasses grow deeper roots and can stay green longer during dry weather. If you are planting new grass, choosing drought-tolerant varieties from your local British Garden Centres can make a big difference in how well your lawn copes with future dry periods.

After a drought, lawns can benefit from some gentle feeding to encourage natural activity in the soil and restore nutrients and promote healthy growth. These can be used after the dry spells end, before laying new turf or seeding.



23rd June 2025

## **Watering tips**

Simple steps can make a big difference in helping your garden survive drought. Collecting rainwater in water butts or buckets can supply watering during dry times. When watering, focus on the base of plants rather than the leaves, and water early or late in the day to avoid losing water to the sun.

Removing weeds is also important because they compete with your plants for water. Grouping plants with similar water needs together makes watering more efficient. If a plant does not survive the drought, replacing it with a tougher, drought-resistant variety will help your garden cope better next time.

**Julian Palphramand, Head of Plants at British Garden Centres**, said: “The dry spring of 2025 has shown how important it is for gardeners to adapt to changing weather. With the right care, plant choices, and watering habits, it is possible to keep gardens healthy and attractive even during long dry spells. By preparing your garden now and following these simple tips, you can create a more drought-resilient outdoor space that will thrive even when the weather is hot and dry.”

**ENDS:**

**WORD COUNT: 1036**

### **Notes to Editors:**

About the business:

British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK’s largest family-owned garden centre group, with 73 centres around the country. The group is owned and led by the Stubbs family, who also own and operate Woodthorpe Leisure Park in Lincolnshire.

BGC was launched in 1990 with the opening of Woodthorpe Garden Centre, funded by brothers Charles and Robert Stubbs. Since 2018, it has expanded rapidly with the acquisition of 50 garden centres, allowing it to grow from its heartland to the business it is now, with 73 garden centres spread from Carmarthen to Ramsgate, Wimborne to East Durham.

The group has a team of 2,700 colleagues working across the garden centres, restaurants, three growing nurseries, 4 distribution centres and Woodthorpe Leisure Park and Woody’s Restaurant & Bar.

### **Social Media**

Facebook: British Garden Centres

Twitter: @BGCentres

Instagram: @BritishGardenCentres

Website: [www.britishgardencentres.com](http://www.britishgardencentres.com)

### **Cassie King**

PR Officer

[cking@britishgardencentres.com](mailto:cking@britishgardencentres.com)

07875 337290