

THE PLAIN DEALER

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THE PLAIN DEALER



Hoses can last a year or a decade, so soak up some facts before buying

Tube talk

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Is the duct tape wrapped around your hose the only thing keeping water from dripping through pin holes?

Does your garden sprayer shoot back as much water in your face as on your flowers?

Hate to state the obvious, but it's time for some new watering equipment.

Choosing a new hose and sprayers might not be so simple. Watering tools are available everywhere from dollar stores to upscale garden centers, in single- and double-digit prices.

"There are hoses intended to last a season or a year, and there are others manufactured to last 10 years or even a lifetime," says Warren Eley, co-owner of Rapid Reel hose reels and hoses in Lincoln, Neb. "This should be the most important product-purchasing factor."

Here are some hose- and sprayer-buying tips from Eley and Lowe's garden center experts.

Chris Bade, live-nursery specialist at Lowe's in Brooklyn, says it's not a bad idea to invest in a watering timer to cut down on your water bill, especially if you're the type who dashes into the house to get something and forget that you're watering, and before you know it, you're in bed, leaving the water running all night.



LOWE'S

Before purchasing a spray gun, make sure it feels comfortable to hold and that it isn't cumbersome. These Gilmour Innovation Twin grip nozzles (\$11.56) are at Lowe's.

Rubber hoses (\$64.99 each) in cool colors, from Gardener's Supply Company. www.gardeners.com

SEE HOSE | E6



GARDENER'S SUPPLY COMPANY

High-rise sprinkler (\$19.95) from Gardener's Supply Company offers a soft sprinkle to hard-to-reach places. www.gardeners.com



RAPID REEL

The Four-Wheel Wagon Reel by Rapid Reel (\$189) makes it easy to maneuver this 100-foot black rubber garden hose.



GARDENER'S SUPPLY COMPANY

High-Rise Sprinkler (\$44.95) from Gardener's Supply Company. www.gardeners.com



LOWE'S

Soaker hoses that lie on the ground send water straight to plant roots. This Swan Soaker Hose (\$11.68) is made from 68 percent recycled tire rubber. It's available at Lowe's.

HOSE

FROM E1

Soak up some facts before buying a hose

Don't guess how long of a hose your yard needs. Measure the length and width of the area the hose will have to reach. Don't forget the need to move a new hose from front to back yards, decks, and garage areas.

The most obvious advice? Save your receipt.

■ **PVC or rubber?** Garden hoses come in two main categories, PVC and rubber. PVC or vinyl hoses are less expensive and more common than rubber hoses. However, they're also stiffer, lighter weight and less durable than rubber hoses.

Rubber hoses tend to be more pliable than PVC, making them easier to coil up or reel back onto a hose reel. They kink less and are less likely to burst. Rubber hoses and hoses reinforced with rubber

also maintain greater pliability as temperatures drop, so they have a higher price tag.

■ **Kinking.** All hoses can kink. The difference between a good hose and one of lesser quality is the level of kink "memory," Eley says. The higher the kink memory, the more easily it will kink again.

Typically, PVC hoses have a much higher kink memory than rubber hoses.

■ **Ply.** A ply is a layer. The more plies, the stronger. Household hoses vary from one to six plies.

■ **Size.** The bigger the diameter, the more water will be delivered. Hoses of one-half inch, five-eighths inch, three-fourths inch and one-inch are available. The most common sizes are three-fourths and five-eighths.

■ **Length.** Hose is sold in increments of 25 feet, usually 25 to 100 feet in total length. Water pressure diminishes as the hose length increases, so buy a hose that's long enough to reach where you will be using it and no longer. If you occasionally re-



RAPID REEL.

This 100-foot black rubber garden hose by Rapid Reel is \$79.99.

quire a long hose, buy two shorter ones and combine when needed. If you have two spigots, put one hose at each water supply.

■ **Metal fittings.** Most hoses are equipped with metal fittings. However, not all metal fittings are crush-proof. Look for a high-quality rubber hose made with fittings that come with a crush-proof guarantee. Crush-proof brass fittings on hoses provide lasting endurance in any condition and a temperature range of

minus 40 degrees to 190 degrees Fahrenheit.

■ **Coupling, or fitting.** The coupling is where the hose attaches to the water supply. The two main choices are brass and plastic. Brass is more durable than plastic but may be difficult for anyone with limited hand strength to tighten to the spigot. For easy hand tightening, choose a hose with an ergonomically shaped plastic coupling.

■ **Specialty hoses** include sprinklers and soakers made for lawn and garden irrigation. Sprinkler hoses are dotted with holes on one side to gently spray upward.

A soaker hose is porous and can be buried under a layer of mulch. They leak small amounts of water directly to your plants' roots with little waste.

Coil hoses stretch like a slinky. Make sure you don't have to go around anything to water, warns Bade of Lowe's. Coils easily get caught on chair legs, shrubs and other obstacles in the yard.

A space-saving flat hose expands to its full diameter when

the water is turned on and stores flat when not in use.

Tips

Lowe's FYI: If you grab an occasional drink from your hose on a hot day, get a hose that's designated boat, marine, or recreational. Their plastic lining makes them safe for transmitting drinking water. The components used in standard hoses are not always safe for ingestion.

Once you find the right hose, take care of it. Coil the hose after use, either by hand or with a hose reel. If the hose kinks, re-roll it immediately to prevent splitting.

Keep the hose out of the sun. Hot water expands in the hose; UV rays weaken the material.

During winter, drain the hose and store it out of the elements.

As for sprayers, the "get what you pay for" principle applies for those, too. But there are other considerations.

Check the ergonomics, especially of spray guns, to make sure it feels comfortable in your hand, and that the device isn't too

heavy," says Jennifer Sypeck, director of product trends for Smith & Hawken.

Buy a hose that can turn off and on at the nozzle if you need to stop occasionally, so that you don't have to walk back to the spigot each time.

Look for nozzles with a variety of spray speeds and textures if watering multiple kinds of plants. For example, the flood setting is good for a plant that needs a good soaking at the root. Delicate flowers, like dahlias, need a delicate spray.

Sprinklers and soakers that lie against the ground are convenient for senior citizens and gardeners with disability because they don't need to be hauled around the yard. They're also good for the environment because, with an intense soak, the water needn't be left on as long.

"The water goes directly to the roots, which is great," Sypeck says.

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