



Summertime, and whether you are working or vacationing there is probably a water element on the schedule. We spend a lot of resources seeking water. Adult humans need to drink at least 8 cups of water a day, but that would be increased to one gallon for men and $\frac{3}{4}$ gallon for women who are active. Water is essential to all life.

In our bodies it is the main component of blood, brain, and muscles. It removes carbon dioxide and other byproducts of metabolism from working muscles. Blood (water) moves glucose and dissolved oxygen throughout the body, and it helps to regulate body temperature as we sweat, and water evaporates from the skin. There is a similar importance to plants. Most of the weight of a plant is water; liquid nutrients and sucrose are transported through the vascular system. Water is lost or transpired from leaves and as the plant is cooling off it is also creating a negative pressure in its vessels, which suck moisture from the ground to the areas of the plant that are actively growing.

One of my earliest memories is playing in the sprinkler. I would sit on it happy as a princess or run through the cool water spray with glee. I don't remember a time when I couldn't swim. My parents were excellent swimmers and instilled that summer pleasure into all their children. As a young mother I loved to take my son to the beach and later the pool. We were lucky that our neighbor invited us, and still does, to swim off his dock. Swimming against the tide is not an easy feat, and even though the water is not clear it is clean and refreshing on a hot summer afternoon. We love throwing the cast net, crabbing with hand lines and pots, eating all that yummy food that abounds in Beaufort waters.

Like most gardeners I spend a lot of time walking around with hoses, buckets, and watering cans to keep those precious plants alive. I came to work this morning after a hot weekend with no rain and found a couple of lemon balm cuttings had dried up to the permanent wilting point, and a Swamp hibiscus was looking very stressed in its pot. No water.

When the Clemson Extension office relocated to our wonderful new digs I took the office in the middle with no window. I bought a small bird bath for the office about a year ago and saw the occasional mockingbird taking off as someone went out the front door. Recently one of our agents moved on, and now I have an office with a window. I may have a hard time getting any work done because it's so much fun watching the brown thrashers, cardinals, chickadees, and other friends splashing and shimmying just outside. Today a female painted bunting came by for a dip.

Whether it is a swimming pool, fish pond, puddle, or fountain, attracting wildlife or just chilling out, water features offer such a great invitation to observe nature and beat the heat. Luckily, we also have access to rivers, creeks and the ocean's tidal pools and waves. Everything alive needs water.