

greater flexibility and durability.

SIZE AND DESIGN

Garden hoses are subjected to high water pressure, as well as extreme heat and cold when left outdoors, so it is best to have some kind of reinforcement if you expect your hose to last.

Like car tires, most hoses are constructed with a reinforcing "ply" layer sandwiched between the inner and outer sections. Some hoses also feature radial-belted construction for added strength.

Again, the strength you need will depend, in part, on your anticipated usage. Hoses with a single layer of reinforcement, with the same quality material, are more likely to burst under pressure than hoses with two or more layers.

The interior design and diameter size are important in delivering a steady and sufficient flow of water. The vast majority of garden hoses sold today have a 5/8" inside diameter, which is particularly suitable for yards of one-third to one-half acre in size, when reaching distances of up to 150 feet.

A 50-foot length of 5/8" hose will deliver about 959 gallons of water per hour compared to 523 gallons per hour for 1/2" hose. A 3/4" diameter hose, which will deliver 1,570 gallons per hour, can finish many watering chores in one-third of the time. It's also recommended if you need to reach more than 150 feet, or require lots of water.

EASY-TO-USE

In general, every gardener wants a hose that coils easily and naturally, but is strong enough to resist kinking. Most vinyl hoses coil easier than rubber, but become more difficult to wind in colder weather.

In terms of spigot fittings, outdoor spigots are universal in size in the United States, but those made of brass will last the longest.

COST AND DURABILITY

Hoses are not extravagantly expensive, yet gardeners generally expect many years of use before having to replace them.

A 50-foot length of hose can cost less than \$10 or up to \$40, depending on the type and brand you buy. Some hoses also carry a warranty ranging from two years to a lifetime guarantee.

SPECIALTY HOSES

There are certain types of hoses you can use for specific types of watering. For instance, soaker hoses feature a dripping/sweating action that slowly and evenly distributes water. The soaking method helps ensure that water gets to the roots of shrubs, trees and flower beds.

Another specialty item is the misting sprinkler hose, a flat, vinyl hose with minute holes which the water sprays out of. These are ideals for watering narrow sections of the yard and garden.

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