

## Olla (oi-ya) Irrigation

*By Gregg Eyestone  
Riley County Extension Agent, Horticulture*

An efficient way to water non-woody plants is by planting an *olla* along with the plants. The *olla* is an unglazed clay pot. When filled with water, it seeps water through the porous clay. Plant roots grow around the *olla* to get the available moisture. This method of irrigating virtually eliminates runoff and evaporation allowing the plant to absorb nearly 100 percent of the distributed water.

The open end of the *olla* extends above the ground for easy of filling with water. This above ground portion should be treated to prevent evaporation. A flat cover is placed over the fill opening to avoid water loss.

### Considerations

- Use with low-water-use, non-woody plants. Woody plants roots can break the clay *olla*.
- Match *olla* diameters with the diameter of plant clusters. Use shallow, broad ollas, for clumps of grasses and annuals.
- May be most practical in container gardens.
- *Olla* pottery can be a decorative element in the landscape. The above ground portions of *ollas* should be glazed or treated to prevent evaporation.
- Cluster *ollas* and plants to maximize water-use efficiency.
- Match *olla* porosity, size, and shape to plants' water needs, root size and root distribution.



Available sizes and shapes



*Olla* used in a container



*Olla* made from two clay pots

110 Courthouse Plaza, Room B220, Manhattan, KS 66502-0111  
785-537-6350, Fax: 785-537-6353 www.riley.ksu.edu

Riley County – Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service – K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

*“Knowledge  
for Life “*