

## Outdoor Water Use

In the summer each of us uses about 250 gallons of water a day—that's more than twice what we use in the winter. And research suggests much of that extra use is simply wasted. Nobody has enough water to waste. Please use what you need, but don't waste it.



**Water Conservation  
Doing Our Share**

Water conservation is not just for emergencies. Water conservation today saves you money on your next water bill, reduces the cost for developing new supplies, and leaves more water in the rivers for fish and recreation. Even if you're not connected to public water and sewer services, conservation is a good idea. You'll save money on water pumping and heating, extend the life of your well and septic system, and avoid depleting groundwater supplies.

### Learn How Much is Enough

Depending on the weather, it's generally better to water about once a week and provide 1 inch to 1 1/2 inches of water. (If it's hot, you might have to water more often.) Time how long it takes to apply one inch of water by placing a flat-bottomed can about 6-ft. away from the sprinkler. Turn the water on and time how long it takes to fill the can with one inch of water. For the next watering, set a timer as a reminder to turn off or move the sprinkler.

Don't over water. Puddles of water and runoff definitely indicate too much water. Puddles may also indicate your soil isn't able to absorb enough water and needs conditioning. Thatch and aerate the soil. To do any good, the water must be able to penetrate the soil. You can put off watering another day if there is heavy dew on the grass.

Don't water when it's windy or raining. If your sprinklers are on a timer, override them when it's raining. Some timers have a 'rain switch' feature which temporarily interrupts the water schedule if weather conditions make watering unnecessary.

**Water early in the morning** before 10:00 a.m. Watering in the heat of the day allows the water to evaporate and watering late in the day may promote fungus and other lawn diseases.

### Choose the Right Plants

- When landscaping, buy plants that are low water-users. A good nursery will be able to advise you.
- Consider replacing turf with ground covers such as junipers or heathers.
- Group high-water use plants and water them together by area.
- Don't put high-water use plants (including turf) on steep slopes or plant grass on areas then than 10 feet wide. It's almost impossible to irrigate narrow strips with sprinklers without wasting water. Such areas are more suitable for low water-users on a drip irrigation system.

### **Use the Right Equipment**

- A good stationary sprinkler or soil soaker will water a large area evenly.
- Avoid oscillating sprinklers since they tend to over-water at the ends when they reverse direction.
- Using shut-off nozzles on hoses is an excellent way to avoid unnecessary water waste. Several types are available at local hardware stores, nurseries and home centers.
- Check hoses for leaks and replace washers in hose connectors. Leaks will cost you more money and distribute water unevenly.
- Use a hand-held sprayer to water shrubs and special plantings so you can control where the water goes.

### **Take Care of Your Lawn**

- Keep your lawn in good shape. Keep weeds down. They rob your lawn and plants of nutrients and water.
- Mow higher and less frequently. Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade in one mowing. Mowing puts the grass under additional stress that requires more water.
- Use a mower with sharp blades. Dull mower blades tear grass blades, creating unnecessary stress on your lawn. Leave the clippings on the lawn as mulch if they aren't thick and matted.
- Start a new lawn in early fall to take advantage of autumn rains and moderate temperatures.
- During periods of drought, many grasses will normally go dormant. When water becomes available again, grass will readily regenerate. During dry spells, accept that your grass won't look perfect (and try to reduce foot traffic on dry turf areas).

### **Maintain Planted Beds**

- Cultivate the soil regularly so water can penetrate and develop a good root system.
- Use mulch in rows and around plants to retain moisture.
- Keep weeds down so they don't compete for water and nutrients.
- Consider using a soaker hose or drip irrigation system instead of a sprinkler if your garden is large. These methods also help prevent evaporation of water from leaves and upper parts of plants.

### **Other Ways to Save Water Outdoors**

- When you wash your car, use a bucket, sponge, and shut-off nozzle on the hose.
- Sweep sidewalks, driveways and patios instead of hosing.
- Restrict play in the sprinklers to when the lawn needs watering.
- Clean gutters and downspouts manually, without using a hose.