

With long-term water supplies uncertain, we need to make every drop of water count. But unless local ordinances prohibit outdoor watering, your garden and lawn don't have to be brown.

Metropolitan Water District and the Green Industry Council Southern Region would like to offer some suggestions to help you keep your lawn and garden green while conserving water.

This brochure lists a variety of water-saving tips from landscape professionals. Select as many items as you need to meet our conservation goals. Easier, less expensive recommendations are listed first.

Water management: Budget your water use.

Sensible water management is the most important way to save water on your landscape. The following steps will result in 10- to 30-percent savings.

1. For every 10 minutes you ordinarily water, shorten the time by one minute. This will result in a 10 percent savings and, in most cases, will cause no harm to your landscape.
2. Water after 4:00 p.m. and before 10:00 a.m. to save on water lost to evaporation and wind.
3. Water your garden and lawn only when it needs it. Let your landscape tell you when to water:
 - Lawn — It's time to water grass when the blades roll up, or when it doesn't spring back when stepped on.
 - Trees and shrubs — Don't wait for signs of wilt, as this will weaken the trees and shrubs. Instead, check the soil with a moisture probe and water when the top 2 to 6 inches of soil is dry. The more

drought-tolerant shrubs are, the deeper the soil can dry.

4. Use warm-up water from the shower to water plants.
5. In times of severe water shortages, turn your automatic sprinkler controller off and operate the sprinklers manually.
6. Water thirsty plants or dry spots by hand. Don't turn on the sprinklers to water them.
7. To prevent run-off — especially on slopes and banks — water in several short, consecutive cycles. Stop watering before run-off starts, turn sprinklers off for an hour to allow water to soak in, then turn sprinklers on again until proper irrigation is achieved.
8. Tune up your sprinkler system: Repair broken sprinkler heads and leaks in pipes. These can waste 5 to 10 gallons per minute.
9. Adjust sprinklers and add, subtract or move sprinkler heads to eliminate dry or wet spots.

Lawn care: Don't starve your lawn, put it on a diet.

By incorporating water-saving practices, lawns can be kept alive even when water use is significantly cut back. You may not have to lose your lawn to save water. However, if further savings are needed, you may have to settle for less than a perfect lawn.

1. Mow the cold season grasses higher — 3 to 4 inches. This encourages deeper rooting and decreases evaporation.
2. Use less fertilizer in times of drought. Nitrogen encourages growth, which leads to increased water use. Also, make sure the fertilizer you *do* use is chemically balanced.

3. Aerate the lawn; that is, punch holes in it with a hand or power aerator. This will increase water penetration and reduce run-off. Also dethatch warm season grasses in the fall to renovate them and to help water penetration.
4. Irrigate your lawn down to the root zone, roughly 4 to 6 inches below the soil surface. Use a soil probe to determine water depth. Watering too shallow or too deep is inefficient.
5. Think about planting drought-resistant grasses like tall fescues, bermuda grass and zoysia that survive on once-a-week watering.

Shrub and tree care: Protect your growing investment.

You can save your trees and shrubs and still save water.

1. Give your garden a security blanket. A 2- to 4-inch layer of mulch will keep water down where it's needed and prevent water-wasting weeds.
2. Trees and shrubs have deep root systems that can extend 2 to 5 feet below the ground. It is important to water established plants infrequently and deeply.
3. Most established shrubs can survive on once-a-week watering. Many drought-tolerant plants, once established, can survive on once-a-month watering.
4. Trees do need watering, especially in periods of prolonged drought. If they don't get it, they'll weaken and become susceptible to insects and other diseases that can kill them. Water established trees every 2 to 3 months during the dry season. Drought-tolerant trees require less.
5. Get water to tree and shrub root zones. Drip irrigation, soaker hose and root feeder systems do this well.

Maintenance of hillside plantings: A note of caution.

“Greenbelts” act as firebreaks and transition zones, protecting fire-hazardous hillside vegetation. These plantings should be drought tolerant, but also of low-fire hazard. Here are a couple of ways to keep your hillside property safe from fire.

1. Maintain minimum plant moisture content to keep vegetation more fire resistant. Look for signs of stress and irrigate accordingly. Once-a-month irrigation in the fire season is recommended.
2. Use low-flow sprinkler heads and multiple-start irrigation controllers to eliminate hillside run-off and achieve proper water penetration.

And for some really big savings ...

These tips require materials and techniques not always readily available. Therefore, you may want to consider consulting or hiring a landscape professional.

1. Have your sprinkler system evaluated to tell if it's performing efficiently. By using a computer analysis, problems with the irrigation system are pinpointed and an accurate irrigation schedule is developed.
2. Your lawn and other high-water-use areas should be on sprinkler systems separate from shrubs, trees, and other lower-water-use plants.
3. Consider installing a drip irrigation system in your garden. It can save more than half the water needed for shrub and tree areas.
4. Install a shut-off device to override your automatic irrigation system when it rains.

A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO GARDEN AND LAWN WATER SAVINGS

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The Green Industry Council Southern Region contributed the technical data for this brochure.

