

USING WATER EFFICIENTLY

GUIDE NO. 3

IDEAS FOR GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING

Water efficiency plays an important role in conserving and protecting our region's water sources and improving water quality. By using water efficiently, you can save money and help protect the environment. This guide along with Guides 1 and 2 were developed to describe ways to use water efficiently.

Up to 75 percent of a home's total water use during the growing season is for outdoor purposes. Water efficiency simply means using less water to provide the same benefit.

Reductions in landscape and garden irrigation offer the greatest potential for decreasing water use during the spring and summer months. Proper irrigation techniques can reduce your consumption by as much as 25 percent and still maintain a flourishing landscaped yard and productive garden. In this guide are some tips which may help keep landscaping and gardens flourishing yet conserve one of our precious natural resources.

Trees, Shrubs, and Plants

Installation of water-saving devices and/or appliances can reduce water use in the home. The following is a list of suggested devices and appliances that can reduce water use.

- Deep root water mature trees weekly during the dry periods.
- Water at drip line, which is the area on the ground along the edge of the plant canopy.

- Water very early in the morning.
- Use “soaker” hose with discharge holes turned downward on the soil surface for irrigation of ornamental plantings.
- In the spring, do only corrective pruning, that is remove only dead and diseased branches. Prune only leaf surface during summer.
- Adjust sprinklers to water plants only: not sidewalk, driveway, patio, etc.
- Learn what types of trees, shrubbery, and plants do best in area and plant accordingly. Consider native species.

Mulches

- Apply organic mulch to reduce soil temperature, moisture evaporation, and control weeds. Mulch can consist of dry lawn clippings, composts, leaves, conifer needles, sawdust other than red cedar, and bark chips.
- Apply organic mulch material with small particle size only to a depth of 1 to 2 inches. Avoid excessive compaction and allow air exchange between the soil and the atmosphere.
- Coarse materials that do not readily decompose or compact can be applied to a depth of 3 or 4 inches.
- Apply mulch evenly. Do not pack around the trunk of the plant. Pull mulch back from the trunk to provide air circulation.

Xeriscaping

Xeriscaping is a type of landscaping that promotes the use of low water requiring plants and efficient irrigation systems as well as ongoing maintenance to conform to local climate needs. The seven principles of xeriscaping are as follows:

1. Planning and design
2. Soil improvement
3. Efficient irrigation
4. Practical turf areas
5. Mulching
6. Using lower water-demand plants
7. Maintenance.

Trickle or Drip Irrigation

Trickle or drip irrigation allow slow water penetration into the root zone with minimum surface wetting. Installation of this type of irrigation may be worthwhile particularly if large areas are to be irrigated.

Drip irrigation allows a steady supply of water to be delivered slowly to the soil around the plant roots. Often a 60 percent or more savings in water usage may be realized with a drip system. Different types of drip emitters are available, including pressure compensating drippers with various flowrates, half circle and full-circle sprayers, bubblers. Consult with a drip irrigation specialist, manufacturer, or with the manufacturer's literature.

General Watering

- Frequent, shallow waterings lead to shallow roots. Shallow roots lead to more rapid stress under drought or hot conditions.
- Theoretically, outside watering can be accomplished at any time of day, but it is more efficient to water at night or in the very early morning, when evaporation is low.
- Too much water is as bad as, or worse than, too little. Rate of water application should be no more rapid than the rate at which the soil can absorb it.
- Fertilizers spread around plants do absolutely no good unless dissolved. Fertilizers have to be watered in, and soils have to be moist to get the full effect of the fertilizer application.

Resources

- ***Drip irrigation catalog or brochure:***

Pick up a catalog or brochure on drip irrigation systems at a local gardening store, nursery, and home improvements store.

- ***Consult a reference book at the library or bookstore:***

- *Scotts Sprinklers & Watering Systems, Complete Guide to Planning and Installing Landscape Irrigation*
- *Sunset Western Landscaping Book*
- *Landscape Drip Application Guide: A Practical Guide for Designing and Installing Drip Irrigation Systems* by Rain Bird Corporation at www.rainbird.com/drip/literature/index.htm.

- ***For expert advice:***

Contact a hardware store, plumber, or visit the Department of Ecology's water conservation web page (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/ws/wtrcnsv.html>) for additional links and tips, or contact Washington State University Cooperative Extension drought publications at (<http://drought.wsu.edu/pubs.html>).

This **USING WATER EFFICIENTLY GUIDE** was brought to you by the City of Dayton as part of its effort to use its water resources wisely and responsibly. Questions or comments on this guide or the City's other water efficiency efforts should be directed to the address and/or phone numbers below.

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