

## WATER CONSERVATION TIP – JULY 2019

**Saving Water During Summer** As summer arrives, average household water consumption more than doubles, mostly due to landscape irrigation. But you don't have to forego gardening to trim outdoor water use. With just a few simple steps, you can reduce your landscape's water needs.

Reducing household water usage won't just preserve existing resources – it will also save you money. Try these 16 easy ways to save water.

### 1. Water at the right time

Water landscapes early in the morning, when air is still and evaporation loss minimal. Conversely, avoid watering on windy days and at midday, when water frequently evaporates before it can soak into soil. With automatic irrigation systems, always adjust your controller when the seasons change.

### 2. Monitor leaks

Check all hose connections for drips. Frequently inspect washers, replacing as needed. Repair leaky exterior spigots. Many faucet fixes are simple do-it-yourself tasks. Also inspect valves in automatic irrigation systems for leaks.

### 3. Collect rain

Create your own water supply by collecting rain runoff. Rain barrels offer fast and easy installation. A cistern provides large-volume water collection and is often a project you can tackle yourself. Contact your local Cooperative Extension System office for cistern schematics and considerations.

### 4. Reconsider slopes

It's difficult to irrigate slopes efficiently. Buffer and reduce runoff on grassy slopes by planting edges with ground covers or shrubs. Native plants are an ideal choice.

### 5. Know your soil

With automated irrigation, make sure soil is absorbing water – and not permitting runoff. Many soil types, such as clay or dry desert soil, don't absorb large amounts of water easily. Use short, repeated watering cycles to deliver water at a rate soil can absorb. Most irrigation controllers can be programmed to water in short, repeated intervals. Follow this same technique when irrigating slopes. Also consider amending soil with organic matter to improve soil's water holding capacity.

### 6. Build basins

Mound soil to form a water collection basin around plants and shrubs. If space permits, extend the basin to a plant's dripline.

### 7. Replace lawn

Carefully consider lawn needs. Lawns need twice as much water as beds filled with flowers and shrubs. Some of the most challenging lawn areas to water efficiently are slopes (see No. 4), curving areas and narrow swaths under 10 feet. Replace lawn with native plant groupings or outdoor living areas.

### 8. Re-use water

Collect household wastewater from dehumidifiers or air conditioning condensers for irrigation. Use water immediately, or save it in a bucket for future use. Don't recycle water containing bleach, fabric softener or automatic dishwashing detergent.

### **9. Sweep debris**

Grab a broom instead of a hose to clean sidewalks, driveways, porches or decks. Sweeping conserves water (and burns calories).

### **10. Create zones**

Group plants based on water needs to enhance irrigation efficiency. In an existing landscape, tackle this project over several years by renovating one planting area at a time.

### **11. Mulch soil**

Apply a 2-inch layer of mulch to planting beds to slow water evaporation from soil. Mulch also helps suppress weeds.

### **12. Update equipment**

Replace and upgrade irrigation equipment, including timers and sprinklers. Look for low precipitation rate sprinklers, smart controllers, and low-volume micro-irrigation, such as drip irrigation, soaker hoses, bubbler irrigation and micro-sprinklers. These items water plants slowly, minimizing evaporation, runoff and overspray. Consider retrofitting landscape sprinklers to drip irrigation.

### **13. Dethatch & aerate**

Help lawns absorb water efficiently by limiting thatch and aerating on a regular basis.

### **14. Mow correctly**

Mowing at the proper height for summer growing conditions reduces a lawn's water needs.

### **15. Sprinkle wisely**

Observe sprinklers to make sure they're working properly. When running a sprinkler, set an oven timer to ensure you don't forget to turn the water off.

### **16. Stop dribbles**

Add a shut-off valve to the end of hoses. Turn the valve to the off position when you're dragging the hose from place to place.