



Managing a *waterSmart* Landscape

TIPS

Lawns, plants, and shrubs need only one inch of water every 7 to 10 days to remain healthy. To determine one inch of water, place a small shallow pan in the path of your lawn sprinkler. Monitor the time that it takes to fill the pan to a one inch depth. Use this as a guide for each sprinkler in your yard. If water begins to run off before one inch is collected, turn off the water and allow the soil to absorb the surface water before returning to finish the one inch accumulation.

Water only once per week. When it hasn't rained, a deep soaking every week will provide your plant plenty of moisture.

Soak, don't sprinkle. When you water, aim the nozzle at the base of the plants so more water will reach the roots.

Don't water in the heat of the day. You will only lose water to evaporation. If you have an automatic system, set it to come on in the early morning hours between 4 a.m. and 10 a.m.

Turn off the sprinkler systems when it rains. Install an inexpensive rain sensor shut-off switch.

Mulch! Using pine straw, bark chips or ground hardwood mulch on the roots of the plants and trees helps the soil retain water.

Don't water until plants need it. Far more plants die from over-watering than underwatering. For many garden plants, the best way to know if plants need water is to let your finger be the guide. Dig down several inches near the base of the plant. If the soil is bone dry, that's your cue to water. When a plant begins to show signs of wilting, especially in the morning, it probably needs water.

Water the roots and soil around plants rather than spraying the leaves and flowers.

Using more efficient irrigation techniques. Drip irrigation systems, automatic controllers with rainfall sensors and soaker hoses all successfully achieve more efficient irrigation and reduce water loss from evaporation. Individual plants that are visibly stressed also benefit from hand watering.

Select a sprinkler that releases water slowly and close to the ground rather than one that releases a mist that tends to evaporate quickly.

Check to see if your lawn sprinklers are working properly. Test your sprinkler by making sure it goes edge to edge and doesn't water the street instead of your lawn. Sometimes all it takes is to just adjust the sprinkler head to make sure it has uniformity. *Remember there are watering restrictions in place.

Don't use sprinklers for entertainment. Running through water from a hose or sprinkler is fun and a nifty way to cool down, but it wastes hundreds of gallons of water in a short time. Also, running and playing on wet grass will compact soils and lead to a decline in lawn health and vigor.

Don't be shy with mulch when it comes to your trees this summer! Use mulch to cover the entire area of the tree to the ends of the branches. This keeps the soil cool, combats weeds, conserves water and creates more visual appeal than trying to grow grass in the area.

Fine-textured mulches hold moisture better than coarse-textured mulches. Good mulches to use are pine straw, bark chips or ground hardwood mulch. Avoid large nugget pine bark, rock, gravel and marble.

To enhance your mulch, saturate old newspaper and place below the mulch to help retain moisture in the soil.

A slight adjustment to your lawn mower can drastically increase lawn survival during a drought. Encourage deeper rooting by raising the mower blade during dry weather. Cutting the grass a little higher raises lawn survival rates and decreases water demand. Sharp blades also help reduce the need for water because dull blades shred leaf tips, causing the turf to use more water than necessary.

Adjust your mower to a higher setting and mow more frequently. Consider leaving clippings on the lawn. Longer grass blades provide shade and help hold in moisture longer.

Keep off the grass. Avoid walking on grass during periods of drought stress. Mow lawns as little as possible during droughts to avoid additional stress, and cut at the highest possible setting. Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade in one mowing. Allow mulched clippings to remain on the lawn to help cool the soil and retain moisture.

Aerate your lawn. Aeration improves the movement of water and nutrients into the soil, decreases run-off and encourages the roots of grass to grow deeply and to become drought tolerant.

For more outdoor water use tips,
visit www.ConserveWaterGeorgia.net

For information about the drought and current drought response levels,
visit www.gaepd.org

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