This information is provided to you by the Washington County Landscape and Irrigation Committee

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WATER

Conservation Tips for the Home Landscape

A well-designed landscape adds beauty and value to a home. When carefully planned, suitable landscapes can even have a cooling effect on our homes during the summer heat. To maintain green space in our desert environment requires water, but how much is enough and when are we using more than is needed?

Each person in Washington County uses 335 gallons of water per day. Approximately 60% of this amount is used to maintain outdoor landscapes. Here are some tips on how you can conserve water in the home landscape.

Know Your Lawn

Most lawns in Washington County are either bluegrass or tall fescue. Bluegrass requires more water to keep looking green than tall fescue. New lawns require more water than established lawns.

Understand Your Irrigation System

Locate the time clock and learn how to set it. Know where the shut-off valve is in case of an emergency. Be sure your irrigation system is designed correctly and provides "head to head" coverage.

Understand How Weather Affects Your Lawn

High temperatures and low humidity will cause your lawn to use more water. Wind will also increase water loss. Adjust your irrigation system seasonally according to the weather. Do not water during winter months or rainy weather.

Learn Your Soil Type

Sandy soils do not hold water as long as clay soils and may require more water to keep lawns looking nice. On the other hand, with proper watering, you can promote deep-root growth in sandy soils and they can go longer without water than you think.

Trees and Shrubs

Trees and shrubs have a much deeper root system than your lawn. They should be watered deeply, no more than once a week.

Do You Water Your Lawn Every Day?

Once a lawn is established, it doesn't require daily watering. Listed below are some guidelines to help you determine the amount of water to use on your lawn.

New Lawns (Planted within the last two months):

Irrigate twice a day for the first week, once a day for the next two weeks, then every other day for the next two weeks. Six to eight weeks after planting, the lawn should be well established.

Established Lawns (At Least Two Months Old):

Irrigate once every 2-3 days during the summer. During September and October, water once every 4-5 days. Set sprinkler run time to apply .7-1 inch of water each irrigation. Irrigate in the early morning hours before sunrise (2-5 am is suggested).

How to Maintain a Healthy Lawn

Mow at 2½ - 3 inches. If the lawn is high, do not remove more than ⅓ of the height in one mowing. Keep mower blades sharp. Mulching type blades work well as long as you do not let grass get too high. Aerate once a year–twice if you have heavy soil.

Fertilization

Fertilizer should be applied in spring and fall. Fertilization during the summer months should be avoided. Apply no more than one pound of actual nitrogen in one application per 1,000 square feet. For example: 10 lbs. of 10-6-4 or 8 lbs. of 12-12-12 per 1,000 ft. in each application. The lawn will need about four pounds of actual nitrogen in a year or four applications at the suggested rate.

Hard to Manage Areas

Do you notice excessive run off when you water? Is the area sloped or do the soils contain heavy clay? These areas will need special care.

We define "run off" as the point at which water is not going into the ground as fast as it is being applied. This, of course, is wasted water as it ends up in the street, sidewalk, or going down the gutter.

Run off may be caused by these reasons:

1. Water application rate is too fast.
2. Soil type is heavy.
3. Top of soil may be crusted over.
4. Lawn may have a heavy layer of thatch.
5. Area may be on a slope.

Run off may be corrected by the following suggestions:

1. Pre-wet your lawn with a short cycle of 5-10 minutes and come back one hour later and run sprinklers again for an additional 15-20 minutes or so.

2. Heavy soil will benefit from the addition of organic matter. A light application of organic fertilizer should be applied after aeration.

3. Aerate soil twice a year.

4. De-thatching or aeration will remove thatch build-up, but you need to learn why thatch is accumulating. The most common causes are over-fertilization and mowing too short.

5. Aeration may help, but you may also look at changing the landscape to something else that can be drip-irrigated (i.e., shrubs or trees.)