

BE A WATER-SAVER GARDENER

Compiled from Agri-Life Extension Service sources

Here are some important water-saving tips for your garden:

1. Use drought-tolerant plants in your garden. Native and adapted plants generally require less water once established or choose plants that are well-suited local conditions. Keep turf grass to a minimum. Lawns require the greatest amount of water, and automatic residential irrigation systems are water-savers only if they are programmed and maintained carefully.
2. Group plants like plants. Whether selecting trees, shrubs, ground covers, perennials or annuals for your garden, choose those that naturally grow together and require the same amount of water.
3. Water plants only when needed. That means doing a finger check and monitoring the health of the plants. Neither the clock nor the calendar is as reliable as your own observation. Water late in the evening or in the early morning when evaporation will be less and the wind calmer. Always check for runoff and overspray.
4. Improve your soil. Add organic matter such as compost to improve the soil's moisture retention. Aerate heavy or compacted soil around trees and shrubs.
5. Add mulch — two- to four-inch layer of mulch maintains a more consistent soil temperature. It keeps soil cooler on hot days and warmer on cool days. Choose organic mulch that adds texture to your landscape such as shredded bark or chips. Or choose an inorganic form such as gravel or rock. These actually allow more moisture in and are more likely to resist formation of soil fungus and viruses.
6. Trees throughout your landscape help to lower air and soil temperatures as well as reduce plant and soil moisture loss.
7. If you are a container gardener, arrange containers so they shade one another. If you are experiencing a drought or an extended period of high winds, move the pots to a shaded area. You might also consider a drip irrigation line for your grouping of pots.