

## OUTDOOR WATER CONSERVATION

### THROUGHTOUT THE GARDEN

- ✓ Do landscape planting in fall (early September). Choose plants suited to semi-arid conditions.
- ✓ Improve soil structure. Before planting annuals and vegetables, work in generous amounts of organic matter.
- ✓ Get rid of weeds. Pull or hoe them so they won't compete with other plants for water.
- ✓ Mulch. Ground bark, compost or leaf mold keeps soil cooler, reduces evaporation, and discourages weed growth.
- ✓ Collect indoor water in buckets as you wait for it to heat up. Use clear water left over from cooking to water outdoor plants.
- ✓ Protect tender plants from the hot sun by covering them with a shadecloth.
- ✓ Shield plants from drying wind. Construct temporary windbreaks.
- ✓ Control run-off on slopes. Use headers or make basins downslope from plants.

### IRRIGATION

- ✓ Install drip irrigation where possible. Periodically check drip systems for clogged or broken tubing or emitters.
- ✓ Use soaker hoses where drip isn't possible. Stake a soaker hose to desired locations in flower beds, around trees and shrubs and in gardens. Determine the optimal pressure and watering time. Too much pressure causes soaker hoses to spray rather than sweat. Fasten soaker hoses to a hose timer and turn on the timer. You can regulate excess water pressure with a multi-port manifold and hose timers to supply several soaker hoses with ease.

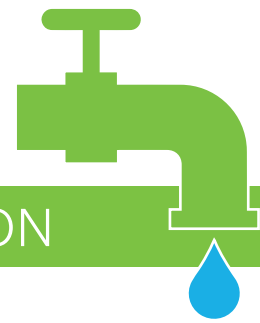
- ✓ Use hose-end shut-off valves for hand watering. Turn off the water as you move the hose from plant to plant.
- ✓ Automate sprinkler systems. Use electronic or mechanical timers and soil moisture sensors to help water efficiently. Use an automatic timer or set a timer to remind you to turn off sprinklers. Use a kitchen timer if you can't install an automated system.
- ✓ Repair leaks. Especially bad hose connections.
- ✓ Water early in the morning or in the early evening when the air is still and evaporation is minimal.
- ✓ Install a rain sensor that allows your irrigation system to automatically shut-off when rainfall exceeds a certain amount.
- ✓ Inspect irrigation systems and fix leaks, broken/clogged sprinkler heads.
- ✓ Use a rain barrel to harvest rainwater from gutters for watering gardens and landscapes.

### VEGETABLES

- ✓ Start plants from seed, if possible. They develop stronger and deeper root systems.
- ✓ Buy small transplants. Avoid seedlings that are rootbound.
- ✓ Plant closer together. Space plants so foliage will eventually touch. This will shade the soil and discourage weeds.

### FLOWER BEDS

- ✓ Plant for quick effects. Use blooming plants from 4-inch pots or 1-gallon cans to dress up the garden instantly.
- ✓ Limit plantings of annuals to only the most important display areas.
- ✓ Choose less thirsty varieties.



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### ORNAMENTAL TREES & SHRUBS

- ✓ Build basins around small ones. Direct water to roots and avoid run-off.
- ✓ Deep-water big trees if soil beneath them is dry 6-8" down. Use a ring of drip emitters, a soaker hose, a deep root irrigator, or a slow trickling hose that you shift from spot to spot.
- ✓ Wet only the root zone. Water shrubs 1-2' deep, trees 3-4' deep. Use a soil probe or dig a small hole to check penetration.
- ✓ Keep grass at least 2-3' away from trunks of young trees, so it doesn't compete for moisture.
- ✓ Use natural mulches. Don't rake fallen leaves or needles from under big trees.
- ✓ Consider xeriscaping and plant low water use plants to limit water use.

### CONTAINER PLANTS

- ✓ Group container plants so they can shade one another.
- ✓ Plant container plants in the deepest shade they can tolerate.
- ✓ Repot. Mixing water holding soil polymers into potting soil.
- ✓ Move rootbound plants into larger containers.
- ✓ Use water retentive pots. Light colored plastic, sealed redwood, and glazed clay are best for slowing evaporation.
- ✓ Double pot. Set small pots inside larger one, with a layer of sand or gravel in between.
- ✓ Use saucers to reclaim water. Catch excess water from each irrigation; suck it up with a turkey baster to water other containers.

- ✓ Bury pots. Set pots in the ground up to their rims.
- ✓ Water gently and carefully. Don't aim strong jets of water at the soil. And don't just spray the foliage.

### LAWNS

- ✓ Cut back on fertilizer. Too much nitrogen encourages production of water thirsty new growth.
- ✓ Pulse-irrigate. Water at short intervals so soil can absorb the moisture without wasteful run-off.
- ✓ Use a power aerator or hand aerator on soil to increase water penetration and reduce run-off.
- ✓ Keep mower blades sharp. Growing grass that gets shredded by dull blades uses more water.
- ✓ Reduce irrigation in shady areas.
- ✓ Leave grass long – longer grass means less evaporation and fewer weeds.
- ✓ Lawns only need water every 3-5 days in the summer. A good rain can save watering up to 2 weeks.
- ✓ Lawn is getting dry when footprints remain after walking on it.
- ✓ If lawn is healthy, consider letting it go dormant in the summer. It will turn green again when it rains.
- ✓ Test soil –
  1. When soil is moist, pick up a handful and squeeze it tightly in your hand. Next, try to pinch the soil into a ribbon. If it forms a 2" long ribbon, it is clay. If forms 1" long, it is loam soil. If it falls apart easily then you have sandy soil.
  2. Add 1-2" organic matter as a surface mulch to improve soil quality.