

# Metro Water District Landscape Watering Advice

## A Guide to a Green, Water Wise Yard

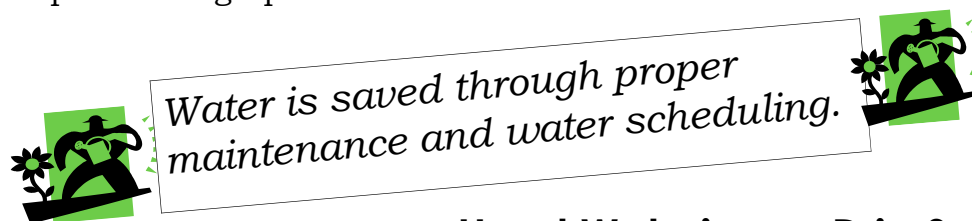


**Efficient outdoor watering can save you time and money.** All it takes is a little maintenance, letting your plants tell you when they need water, and adjusting your watering schedule.

Most people water their plants more than necessary. By following this guide, you can reduce the amount of water you use and still keep your yard green and attractive.

Outdoor water use can account for more than 50% of your water consumption, even more during the summer.

So take a moment, review this guide and consider how you can implement these landscape watering tips.



*Water is saved through proper maintenance and water scheduling.*

### Outdoor Water Use IDEALS

- ◆ Use Mother Nature as the Primary Irrigator. We are the Supplementers.
- ◆ Irrigate only to establish plants: no longer than 3 years.
- ◆ Use supplemental hand watering during times of prolonged drought.
- ◆ Irrigation system clocks set to manual to ensure plants are watered only when they need water.
- ◆ Plant only low water using plants - Go Wild, Go Native.
- ◆ Grass is only for functional, physical use - such as children's play areas, parks, ball fields.
- ◆ No lawn just for looks.
- ◆ Plant only low water using types of turf.



### Hand Watering vs Drip System

An old fashioned handheld hose may be the most effective way to water.

An American Water Works Association study found that "households that water with a handheld hose use 33% less water outdoors than other households."

Drip irrigation systems save water *only* if they are regularly maintained and the irrigation timer is adjusted per season.

Unfortunately, technology can give a false sense of security. People think that because they have a drip system they are saving water and forget to maintain them or change timers.

Watering by hose or at least putting your irrigation system on manual means you only water when the plants need it.

When watering by hose, use a kitchen timer as a reminder to turn off the water.

How ever you choose to water your yard, be aware of the system and how much water you are giving to your plants.



# Principles for A Water Efficient Landscape

## 1. Planning & Design

Make a plan of your site to determine how you intend to use areas around your home. The area closest to the house or building should have the most plants to provide shade, coolness, and aesthetic appeal. Plan to group plants together that have similar water needs.



## 2. Low-Water-Using Plants

Many beautiful, colorful plants use little water, provide year round color and reduced maintenance. Select plants that once established will not need irrigation. Appropriate placement of plants helps reduce energy bills. Grouping plants of common water usage makes for easier care.

## 3. Limit Grass Areas

Grass uses more water than anything else in a yard and requires more maintenance. Plant only low water use turf and place it where it is functional. Maybe use instead one of the many drought tolerant groundcovers.



## 4. Water Harvesting Techniques

Incorporate water harvesting techniques into your landscape design. Locate plants where they can take advantage of this extra water. Channel runoff from rain to plants. Slope walkways toward plantings.

## 5. Efficient Irrigation

Match your irrigation method to the type of plant being watered - - hand watering or drip irrigation for individual plants and spray irrigation for grass. Do not apply water faster than the soil can absorb it.



## 6. Mulches

Apply mulches such as compost, bark chips, decomposed granite or river rock at the base of plants to retain moisture, keep weeds down and control erosion.

## 7. Proper Maintenance

Many low-water using plants need little or no maintenance. Occasional pruning, fertilizing, weeding and pest control may be all that is needed. Maintain the irrigation system to repair leaks. Irrigate efficiently.



*A landscaper's job is to keep your grass, shrubs and plants green and so there is a tendency to over water. Let your landscaper know that you want to use water wisely. Ask your landscaper to keep your yard attractive but to use water efficiently.*

Special Thanks to the Water Conservation Alliance of Southern Arizona and the Cities of Chandler, Glendale, Scottsdale, and Tempe for their contributions and assistance.

# Set Effective Watering Schedules

Many people over water their plants even though most plants can survive just fine with less water than they receive.

**A cardinal rule for effective watering is to water deeply and less frequently.**

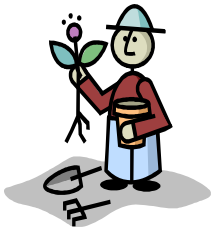


This will encourage the root system to expand and strengthen, and uses water more efficiently. To follow this important rule, you can use the weather as an effective gauge for your watering schedule. Also, you should let your plants tell you when they need water. This requires you to regularly adjust when you water and how you set your drip irrigation timer, if you have one.

If plants wilt in the heat, begin to lose their leaves, or are not thriving, you may need to increase the watering times. When temperatures are over 100 degrees, keep a close watch on newly transplanted plants.



**Here are general weather-based watering guides:**



Shrubs & Groundcovers			
Temperature	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	After 2 Years
Below 75 degrees	Every 2 weeks	Every 3 weeks	Every 30 days
75 – 90 degrees	Weekly	Every 2 weeks	Every 3 weeks
91 – 100 degrees	Twice per week	Weekly	Every 2 weeks
Over 100 degrees	Three times per week	Twice per week	Weekly

This is a general guide to watering plants. The schedule is based on drip irrigation technology, two hour run-time, with one gallon per hour emitters. For your own yard, take into consideration the soil, plant size, plant location, plant type (low or high water use), and plant age.

Trees			
Temperature	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	2 - 5 Years	After 5 Years
Below 75 degrees	Every 2 weeks	Every 30 days	Water if no rainfall within 60 days
75 – 90 degrees	Every 5 - 7 days	Every 3 weeks	Water if no rainfall within 60 days
91 – 100 degrees	Weekly	Every 2 weeks	Gradually extend intervals between waterings to every 3 weeks
Above 100 degrees	Twice per week	Weekly	Gradually extend intervals between waterings to every 2 weeks

This is a general guide to watering trees. Citrus trees need more frequent watering and desert trees need less frequent. The schedule is based on drip irrigation technology, one to two hour run-times with two to three gallons per hour emitters. Trees should be watered to a three foot depth. Use a soil probe to determine if you need to adjust your watering schedule. For your own yard, take into consideration the soil, tree size, tree location, tree type (low or high water use), and tree age.



## Principles for Lawn Watering

- ◆ If you must have a lawn, plant only low water using types of turf - such as Bermuda, Buffalograss and Paspalum.
- ◆ Don't overseed.
- ◆ Water only when you must - - many lawns can get by with less.
- ◆ During the summer, water between midnight and 6:00 a.m. During this time, there is generally less wind, less evaporation, better soaking down to roots and no low water pressure problems.
- ◆ Daily watering, especially during the heat of the day, can damage grass.
- ◆ Avoid watering on windy days or right after moderate or heavy rain.
- ◆ If water runs off grass area, split the run time. Apply one half the normal amount of water. Wait an hour and then apply the other half.
- ◆ Avoid cutting more than 1/3 of the grass height at one time to avoid stressing the grass and turning it yellow.
- ◆ Aim your sprinklers where the water is needed, and don't waste water on open dirt, sidewalks or driveways.
- ◆ The best water principle for turf is removing it. Consider the time, money and water you would save if you no longer had to deal with that lawn on the weekend.



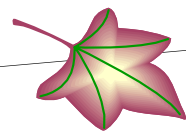
*A 25x40 foot lawn can use more than 27,000 gallons of water a year*

### Signs of Overwatering

- ◆ Ponding or soil constantly damp.
- ◆ Leaves turn yellow or a lighter shade of green.
- ◆ Young shoots are wilted.
- ◆ Leaves are green yet brittle.
- ◆ Algae and mushrooms are growing.

### Signs of Underwatering

- ◆ Soil is dry.
- ◆ Older leaves turn yellow or brown and drop off.
- ◆ Leaves are wilted.
- ◆ Leaves curl.



*Graywater and Water Harvesting are a great source of water for your yard.*

## More information on irrigation scheduling, drip irrigation systems, xeriscape and other landscape watering information can be found at:

U of A/Pima County Cooperative Extension Low 4 Program 626-5161

Water Conservation Alliance of Southern Arizona 623-2023 or

[www.watercasa.org](http://www.watercasa.org)

Tohono Chul Park 575-8468

Tucson/Pima County Libraries - Nanini Branch 791-4626

Metro Water District 575-8100 or [www.metrowater.com](http://www.metrowater.com)

