OREGON WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Saving Water Outside the Home

We can all do our part to reduce impacts of limited water supplies **– and we can start by conserving the water we use today.** Here are some helpful tips for saving water outside the home.

Adjust sprinklers & water when it's cool: Sprinklers should water your lawn and garden, not the street or sidewalk. Most automatic irrigation timers are set to go off in the early morning (5-7 a.m.). Set irrigation timers to water during the coolest part of the day (typically early morning or late evening) to minimize evaporation and reduce peak demand. Avoid midday watering.

Inspect your irrigation system: Look for leaks, broken lines, or blockage in the lines. A well-maintained system will save money, time, and water. Even little things like a shut-off nozzle for your garden hose can save you about 5 – 7 gallons per minute.

Water established lawns about 1 inch per week: You may need slightly more during hot, dry weather. Some water providers will use a "*weekly watering number*" based on local weather conditions to help customers determine exactly how much water their gardens and landscapes need each week.

Adjust your watering schedule throughout the irrigation season: Match watering to weather (more when it is hot and dry, less when it is cooler and wet). Adjusting weekly or when conditions change helps you water your landscape more efficiently.

Apply the amount of water your soil can absorb: Water thoroughly, but infrequently. If runoff or puddling occurs, break longer watering sessions into several short cycles, allowing water to soak into the soil between each session.

Consider water-saving technology: Weather-based irrigation controllers act as a thermostat for your sprinkler system, using local weather data to determine when and how much water to use. Soil moisture sensors water plants based on their needs by measuring the amount of moisture in the soil and tailoring the irrigation schedule accordingly. Rainfall shutoff devices and rain sensors decrease water waste by turning off irrigation when it is raining.

Adjust your mower to a higher setting: A taller lawn provides shade to the roots and helps retain soil moisture, so your lawn needs less water.

Aerate your soil: Soil can become compacted during home construction or from normal foot traffic. Aerating your soil with a simple lawn aerator can increase the infiltration of water into the ground, improving water flow to the root zone and reducing water runoff.

Replace lawns: Consider replacing some lawn areas with low water use plants, ornamental grasses, or native species suited to your climate.
Once established, these plants require little water beyond normal rainfall, are very low maintenance, require little to no pesticides or fertilizer, and are more resistant to pests and diseases.

Use mulch around shrubs & garden plants: Mulch reduces evaporation, inhibits weed growth, moderates soil temperature, and prevents erosion. Types of mulch include bark chips, grass clippings, straw, leaves, stones, and brick chips. Leave a few inches of space between trunks of woody plants and organic mulches to prevent rot.

Group plants together: Creating a garden with "watering zones" allows you to give each plant the water it requires – not too much, not too little.

Minimize or eliminate fertilizer: Fertilizer encourages thirsty new growth. If you do need fertilizer, look for a product that contains "natural organic" or "slow-release" ingredients. These fertilizers feed plants slowly and evenly, helping create healthier plants with strong root systems and no excessive "top growth." The "slow-release" fertilizers can also reduce nutrient run-off into ground and surface waters, protecting natural resources.

Use a broom and a bucket: Sweep patios, sidewalks and driveways clean with a broom, instead of using a hose. Instead of using a running hose, fill a bucket with water to wash your car. A hose equipped with a shut-off nozzle would also work.