# Water Reduction Suggestions

**What steps can I take to reduce water use outside my home?**

You can:

- *Water effectively* - Water infrequently but deeply to encourage your landscape plants to develop deeper roots. To help water penetrate, run two short cycles of watering rather than one long one. For example: water for 12 minutes, wait for 20 minutes and then water for another 12 minutes.
- *Be realistic* - Accept that your landscape cannot look its best during a hot, dry summer. Make sure to water trees and shrubs deeply and infrequently to help them make it through the drought and then don't worry about the smaller plants that can be replaced next year.
- *Wait until fall* - This is not the summer to plant new landscapes (unless you are converting high-water-use grass and plants for a xeric landscape). Wait until fall when we have cooler temperatures.
- *Choose an automatic irrigation system* - An automatic sprinkler system can be set to water the lawn for a specified amount of time. This saves your time and waters the lawn evenly. If you don't have an automatic sprinkling system, set a kitchen timer. A lot of water can be wasted in a short period of time if you forget to turn your sprinklers off. Outdoor faucets can flow at rates as high as 300 gallons per hour.
- *Use a cistern to collect rainwater* - 1,000 square feet of roof or pavement can collect 420 gallons of water from 1 inch of rain. Rooftops or any sloping surface such as a driveway are prime "catchment" areas for rainwater. Store the collected water in a cistern, and siphon it off to water your garden or wash your car. A plastic or metal garbage can is easily converted to a cistern by attaching a spigot and hose. Locate your cistern close to wherever you plan to use the water, and consider the massive weight of such a tank if you plan to put it on your roof. To filter out leaves and debris, install a removable screen at the entrance to the cistern.
- *Spot water* - Drier areas require more water than areas where water settles. If necessary, water dry areas by hand.
- *Use a soil probe to test soil moisture* - Water only when a soil probe shows dry soil or a screwdriver is difficult to push into the soil.
- *Water the lawn only when needed* - Step on the grass; if it springs back up when you move your foot, it does not need water.
- *Don't water the pavement* - Position sprinklers so that water lands on the lawn or garden, not in areas where it is not needed. Also avoid watering when it is windy. Wind causes water to evaporate quickly and blows water onto areas where it is not needed. Remember, if it doesn't grow, don't water it!
- *Water without waste* - Interrupt watering when puddles or runoff occur. This allows the water to penetrate into the soil before resuming irrigation. Consider drip irrigation systems around trees and shrubs - Drip systems permit water to flow slowly to roots, encouraging strong root systems. These systems will also cut down evaporation.
- *Keep lawn free of weeds* - Weeds are water thieves and will rob your plants of water and nutrients. Spot spray or remove weeds as they appear.
- *Accept a less than lush lawn* - Grass will naturally go dormant during periods of drought, but will readily regenerate when water becomes available. Reduce traffic on stressed turf areas if possible.
- *Match fertilizer to the plant requirement* - Fertilizer applications require additional water. Excess fertilizer stimulates top growth, often to the detriment of the root system. Learn to accept turf grasses with low water needs.

- *Mow as infrequently as possible* - Mowing puts the grass under additional stress that requires more water.
- *Mow higher than normal* - Longer leaf surfaces promote deeper rooting and shade the root zone. Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade in one mowing. Return mulched clippings to the lawn.
- *Use a broom to clean the driveway and sidewalk* - Sweeping the driveway and sidewalk will get them clean enough without wasting gallons of water.
- *Don't let the water run while washing the car* - Get the car wet, then turn off the water while you soap the car down using a bucket of soapy water. Turn on the water again for a final rinse. Use the bucket of soapy water on the flower bed or garden.
- *Don't use the sprinklers just to cool off or for play* - Running through water from a hose or sprinkler is fun but wastes gallons of water.
- *Check for leaks in pipes, hoses, and faucet* - All leaks cause water to be wasted. Repair or replace any equipment leaking water.
- *Cover your swimming pool* - Covering a swimming pool will help reduce evaporation. An average sized pool can use about 1,000 gallons of water per month if left uncovered. A pool cover can cut the loss by up to 90%.
- *Recycle your pool water* - Backwashing or draining your pool into the street is against the Water Wasting Ordinance. Use your pool water to irrigate your lawn, plants, trees, and shrubs.
- *Use shut-off nozzles on hoses* - Shut-off nozzles completely turn off the water when you are not using it.
- *Move sprinkler heads away from curbs or sidewalks* - A mulch, bark, or rock area at least 8 inches wide adjacent to sidewalks and curbs will help eliminate water waste.

**Are there some water saving options for inside my home?**

Yes, and here are just a few:

- Go low-flow - If you haven't installed low-flow toilets in your home or business yet, do it now. Changing out a toilet is the fastest way to save water indoors
- Change your showerhead - Some showerheads can use as much as 5 gallons of water per minute. There are many great new showerheads on the market that use only 2.5 gallons per minute. That's a quick way to cut your morning water use in half.
- Pay attention to your water bill - If you notice a spike in your usage that you can't explain, look for leaks. If you can't identify the source on your own, call your water provider
- Wash effectively - Run full loads in your washing machine and dishwasher. Or, to be even more efficient purchase a low water use clothes washer. They are easier on your clothes and use less energy and water.

**Do you have other ways I can save water?**

Remember that there is a direct association between water conservation and energy savings when practicing conservation measures involving hot water. Your hot water heater can comprise as much as 35% of your energy bill. The following tips will save water and energy and your money:

- Not filling the bathtub all the way, or better yet taking a 5 min. shower.
- Install low flow aeration shower and faucet heads. These inexpensive devices really work and pay for themselves! Just screw off the old ones with a common wrench and screw in the new one. Not too tight though.

- Use water level adjustments on laundry washers or wait until you have a full load. Use the cold water setting whenever you can.
- Same for your dishwasher, use full loads, water saving settings and air dry if you have the option available.
- Avoid defrosting foods with running hot water. Plan ahead and defrost the day before in the refrigerator or covered on a counter top.
- Insulate your hot water heater using only approved covers and see if lowering the thermostat a bit still satisfies your hot water needs.

**What is Xeriscape?**

Many people confuse xeriscaping with "zero-scaping." While both of these landscapes use less water than the traditional, turf-dominated approach, they are totally different in appearance and appeal.

- *Xeriscaping* -Uses a wide variety of water-efficient plants to create an oasis-like feeling.
- *Zero-scaping* - Uses lots of rocks and usually only juniper, cactus, or yucca.

**Why Xeriscape?**

For most of the western United States over fifty percent of residential water used is applied to landscape and lawns. Xeriscape can reduce landscape water use by 60% or more.

Efficient water use doesn't mean changing our lifestyle. It means reducing water waste, such as improper irrigation, and finding ways to achieve attractive, comfortable landscapes without excess water use.

Convert some or all of your landscape to xeriscape (low water use plants). Landscape with plants that require less water. These plants can be very attractive and can survive drought better than turf. Rocks, gravel, benches, and deck areas can all be used too.