

## Water Saving Tips: Outdoors

### **Lawns, Plants and Watering**

Adjust sprinklers so only the lawn is watered and not the house, sidewalk or street.

Choose shrubs and groundcover instead of turf for hard-to-water areas such as steep slopes and isolated strips. Trees and shrubs can also reduce the amount of lawn in general areas of the yard.

When watering sloped areas or areas where water runs off easily, water slow and in short five minute increments to ensure effective absorption and less runoff.

Plant in the fall, if supported by the planting instructions of your product, when conditions are cooler and rainfall is more plentiful.

Water the lawn and garden in the morning or evening when temperatures are cooler to minimize evaporation.

When using soaker hoses make sure the holes face down to avoid evaporation.

Spread a layer of organic mulch around plants, trees and flower beds. The mulch retains moisture, saves water, time and money and reduces the growth of weeds which compete for water.

Set an annual time to check outdoor faucets, sprinklers and hoses for leaks.

Adjust the lawn mower to a higher setting. A taller lawn shades roots and holds soil moisture better than if it is closely clipped.

Water small patches of grass by hand and use sprinklers for large areas to avoid waste.

Collect water from the roof and rain gutters for use on indoor and outdoor plants. Direct the rain gutters toward dry areas on the yard or plants with high water needs.

Rather than following a set watering schedule, check for soil moisture two to three inches below the surface with a spade or trowel before watering. If there is moisture watering can be delayed.

Install a rain sensor on automatic irrigation controllers so the system won't run when it's raining.

Use drip irrigation for shrubs and trees to apply water directly to the roots where it is needed.

Don't water the lawn on windy days. Most of the water blows away or evaporates.

Water plants deeply but less frequently to encourage deep root growth and drought tolerance.

Group plants with the same watering needs together to avoid over-watering some while under-watering others.

Use a minimum amount of organic or slow release fertilizer to promote a healthy and drought tolerant landscape with a strong root system. A lawn with a good root system requires less watering.

Use a rain gauge, or empty tuna can, to track rainfall on your lawn. Then reduce your watering accordingly.

Replace flowers and shrubs with low water use plants for year-round landscape color and savings of up to 550 gallons of water each year.

Consult with local nurseries for information on plant selection and placement for optimum outdoor water savings.

Winterize outdoor spigots when temperatures dip below freezing to prevent pipes from leaking or bursting.

Leave lower branches on trees and shrubs and allow leaf litter to accumulate on the soil. This keeps the soil cooler and reduces evaporation.

Let the lawn go dormant during the summer. Dormant grass only needs to be watered every three weeks or less if it rains.

Use sprinklers that deliver big drops of water close to the ground. Smaller water drops and mist often evaporate before they hit the ground.

Consider using an automatic watering system set for times between 4:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.

Over-watering can kill plants just as well as under-watering. Over-watering overloads the soil and encourages plant disease.

Wash pets outdoors in an area of the lawn that needs water.

Aerate the lawn at least once a year so water can reach the roots rather than run off the surface.

Know exactly how long it takes to put one inch of water on the lawn. One inch of water on one square foot of grass equals two-thirds of a gallon of water. Measure how long it takes to reach this level by placing a tuna can under the spray of the sprinkler; start a timer, once the level of water in the can reaches one inch the testing is complete. You now know how long it takes to put an inch of water on

your lawn. The recommended amount of water for most lawns in Texas is an inch to an inch-and-a-half per week.

Decorate areas of the yard that do not use water or won't grow grass with rocks, gravel, wood chips or other materials.

## **Pools**

Install covers on pools and spas to reduce evaporation and check for leaks around pumps.

If the pool has an automatic refilling device, check the pool periodically for leaks.

Avoid recreational water toys that require a constant flow of water.

Check for leaks in a pool by using a grease pencil to mark the water level of the pool at the skimmer. Check the mark 24 hours later to see if there is a leak.

When installing or replacing a lawn select a turf mix or blend that matches the climate and site conditions of the area.

Make sure swimming pools, fountains, and ponds are equipped with re-circulating pumps.

## **Car Washing**

Use a commercial car wash that recycles water.

Wash the car on the lawn, and the lawn get's watered at the same time.

When washing your car use a hose nozzle with a shut off valve. This will save up to 100 gallons with every washing.

## **General Outdoor Tips**

Save more water and money by using a broom instead of a hose to clean the driveway or sidewalk.

Walkways and patios provide spaces that don't require watering. Installing these areas can save water and add value to your property.

Trickling or cascading fountains lose less water to evaporation than those spraying water into the air.