

Outdoor Water Conservation

Irrigation is the number one reason we use more water in the summer than in the winter. Here are some tips for saving water in your own yard:

Tips for Watering Your Plants

Making minor changes to your irrigation practices can have a measureable impact on reducing water waste and lowering your water bill:

- **Inspect your irrigation system for leaks.** Repair any leaks you find, even if they seem minor.
- **Irrigate in the early morning or evening.** Watering at the coolest time of day (early morning or evening) allows your plants to absorb more of the water.
- **Aim your sprinklers low to the ground** to avoid loss to wind and evaporation.
- **Avoid using sprinklers when it's windy** to prevent water from blowing where it isn't needed.
- **Don't water pavement.** Adjust sprinkler heads to keep water off paved surfaces. Your driveway isn't thirsty – save that water for your plants!

Helpful Irrigation Tools

There are lots of ways to improve your irrigation system's efficiency. Here are some ideas:

- **Smart irrigation controllers:** A smart controller turns your sprinkler system on and off based on local weather and landscape conditions, which will help you make sure your plants get the right amount of water.
- **Rain sensors:** A rain sensor is a switch connected to an irrigation system that shuts off a timed irrigation system if it rains. This will help you avoid overwatering!
- **Soil moisture sensors:** These measure the water content in your soil, providing real-time data on how much you should water your lawn or garden.
- **High-efficiency sprinkler heads:** These use low pressure to send rotating streams of water low to the ground, which minimizes evaporation. They are better than high-pressure sprinkler heads, which create mist that gets lost to evaporation or the wind.
- **Soaker hoses or drip irrigation systems:** If you don't have a built-in irrigation system, consider a soaker hose or drip irrigation system. A soaker hose is a particularly affordable way to water small areas of your yard. Keep in mind that they work only in lengths less than 200 feet and are ideal for areas where plants are clustered together. For more information visit the Saving Water Partnership website: www.savingwater.org/lawn-garden/watering-irrigation/drip-irrigation-soaker-hoses/

Creating a Landscape That Needs Less Water

Using creative landscaping techniques, you can build a yard that requires less water in the summer. This can be a fun project – and it looks great!

Here's how to create a water-wise landscape:

1. **Sketch a property map.** Identify the areas and features of your property and determine what you would like to modify or add, such as areas for lounging outdoors or attracting birds. Reducing the overall size of your lawn and replacing it with water-wise plants will bring the most water savings. Front yards and along the sides of the house are often less used, making them great locations for water-wise landscapes.
2. **Create watering zones.** Identify the microclimates of your landscape based on moisture, light, and wind conditions. Each microclimate zone will have different water requirements.
3. **Select plants.** Select low water use plants, such as native plants, that are best suited for each microclimate zone. Not sure which plants are water-wise? Check out these websites for ideas:
 - [OSU Extension's List of Water-Efficient Plants](#)
 - [Native Pollinator Plants for Southern Oregon](#)
 - [Gardening with Oregon Native Plants West of the Cascades](#)
4. **Amend the soil.** Add organic matter, such as compost, to areas you are planting to improve root establishment. This helps plants better tolerate drought.
5. **Use mulch.** Mulch, such as bark and stones, helps to retain soil moisture, decreases erosion, and reduces weeds.