



Additional Water Conservation Tips

Overview

Even though most of the earth is covered with water, less than one percent is readily available for human consumption: at least 97 percent of the earth's water is salty and undrinkable, less than three percent is fresh water, and two percent of that is polluted, polar ice, or otherwise inaccessible. With such a small percentage of the earth's water available for human consumption, it is easy to see why water conservation is important.

Much of the fresh drinking water consumed by U.S. households is for irrigating lawns and gardens. Outdoor watering uses much more water than any other household activity and lawn irrigation is the single largest source of water usage in the home. Outdoor watering uses **5 to 10 gallons per minute**; in just 10 to 20 minutes you use 100 gallons of drinking water which is the amount used by an average person each day for all other personal water needs.

Most Americans tend to use two or three times the water necessary to keep lawns green and healthy. Excessive use of water, in addition to increased water demands due to population growth, causes many adverse effects on our society, economy, and environment:

- ◆ Additional water infrastructure such as wells, pumps, pipes, and water storage facilities is required to keep up with increasing demand.
- ◆ Water infrastructure requires increased maintenance for pipes, sewers, and treatment facilities.
- ◆ Water bodies such as rivers, wetlands, and lakes are degraded from the high levels of water extracted and from the polluted runoff that feeds into them.
- ◆ Homeowners experience higher water and energy bills.

Tips for Conserving Drinking Water

Water conservation is the most cost-effective and environmentally sound way to reduce our demand for water.

- ◆ Use native, drought tolerant plants in your landscape and replace infrequently used lawn areas with native plant landscapes. Native plants are adapted to the local climate and once established, they seldom need watering. Landscaping with appropriate native plants is the single best way to minimize water use outdoors.
- ◆ Harvest rainwater in rain collection systems such as rain barrels and use for irrigation during dry periods.
- ◆ Install rain gardens to capture and infiltrate stormwater runoff on-site. Infiltrating storm water runoff from your yard helps to recharge groundwater.
- ◆ Use a thick layer of mulch around landscape plants and on bare soil surfaces to reduce evaporation, promote plant growth, and reduce weeds.
- ◆ Water plants with soaker hoses to help reduce water loss from evaporation.
- ◆ Water your lawn only when needed. Test soil moisture with a screwdriver or soil probe. If the soil is moist, do not water.

Tips for Conserving Drinking Water (continued)

- ◆ Most lawns only need about 1 inch of water per week (from rain and/or supplemental water). Avoid frequent, light watering which can evaporate quickly and tends to encourage shallow root systems. A good soaking is better than watering frequently and will allow the roots to grow to greater depths and help make turf more drought tolerant.
- ◆ Next time you water, place 3 to 5 empty tuna cans at varied distances from the sprinkler. The time it takes to fill the cans is about how long you should water your lawn.
- ◆ Install a rain shutoff device on your automatic sprinkler system and reschedule your sprinkler timer whenever the weather changes.
- ◆ Never water faster than the ground can absorb the water.
- ◆ Avoid watering your lawn during the hottest hours of the day (between 10AM and 6PM) and on windy days to reduce water loss due to evaporation.
- ◆ Adjust sprinklers to avoid watering sidewalks and driveways.
- ◆ Change your lawn mower to a 3-inch clipping height and try not to cut more than one-third of the grass height when you mow. Keeping the grass taller encourages roots to grow deeper and helps maintain soil moisture by shading the roots system.
- ◆ Apply as little fertilizer on your lawn as possible. Applying excess fertilizer increases water consumption and creates more mowing for you.
- ◆ Use a broom or blower instead of a hose to remove grass clippings and other debris from paved surfaces.
- ◆ Avoid the use of recreational toys and games that require a constant supply of water.
- ◆ Do not install ornamental yard features that require water unless they are set up to recycle water. Avoid use during drought conditions.

Sources: City of Lakeville (www.ci.lakeville.mn.us)
Utah Division of Water Resources (www.conservewater.utah.gov)
Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Inc. (www.hrwc.net)
NUPRANA (www.nuprana.com)