

PRESS RELEASE

The Top Three Outdoor Water Conservation Tips You Need to Know This Spring

Because Texas enjoys a vibrant economy and continued population growth, ensuring we have enough water for current and future Texans remains a top priority in the state. Fortunately, all Texans can play a role in conserving water. Outdoor water can constitute a large portion of overall residential water use, so wise landscape watering is an important place to start. The key to watering the Texas landscape wisely is threefold: 1) Choose plants adaptive to conditions in your area of the state; 2) Measure the amount of water needed to irrigate your landscape; 3) Use the right tools and methods to deliver the optimal amount of water. The Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District is pleased to provide these important tips for watering your yard and plants to get them green, healthy, and thriving while conserving water this spring and summer.



Choose Native Plants

Native and adapted plants are the ideal choice for an aesthetically pleasing and water efficient landscapes in Texas. Whether you are interested in well-manicured looks or a more naturalistic landscape design, there are several native and adapted plants with various structures, textures and colors to meet your needs and to help save time and money. Some of the characteristics that lead Texans to incorporate native or adapted plants include their tolerance for drought and heat, water efficiency, and low pesticide and fertilizer requirements. Vitex, lantana, and red yucca are just a few of the native plants that have low water demands and also provide a gorgeous pop of color to your landscaping. An added bonus is they can also attract bees and butterflies as well.

Calculate Your Watering Needs

Once you've chosen plants well suited to your area, how do you know when and how much to water your landscape? Healthy, properly irrigated lawns rarely need more than one inch of water per week during the summer months. The best time to water all landscape plant material is early morning or late evening when winds are calmer and temperatures are lower, resulting in less water loss to evaporation. A good rule is to wet the soil to a depth of 4 to 6 inches to reach the root system of the plants. Deep, infrequent watering helps plants thrive by promoting deep roots, which helps plants to absorb water from the deeper soil over a longer period of time. Use a soil moisture probe or screwdriver to determine the depth the water reaches. Soil type, amount of rainfall, and season of the year all affect the amount of water you need to apply.



Irrigate Efficiently

After you've made your selection of plants and determined the schedule for watering based on their needs, the next important decision is to select the appropriate way to water your landscaping. One of the most important ways you can help conserve water outdoors is to know the most efficient approaches to applying water to your lawn, flowerbeds, trees and shrubs. Here are three of the most common lawn and garden irrigation methods:



- **Sprinklers**

These systems are popular because they are convenient and supply large areas of a landscape with plenty of water. With careful timing of zone watering and proper selection of spray nozzles, these systems can be adjusted to water in a reasonably efficient manner. Monitor the zone settings and adjust throughout the year to meet changing weather conditions and landscape needs. If settings are not monitored and changed, at some time during the growth season a landscape will be either under or over watered.

- **Drip Irrigation**

Drip irrigation systems are very efficient (use up to 60% less water) at supplying water to smaller areas of a landscape. Drip irrigation places a small amount of water (and, as an option, nutrients) close to the roots. The simplest and least expensive example of drip irrigation is the use of soaker hoses. These are especially useful in flower beds and around trees. They can also be placed next to the house to stabilize soil next to the foundation.

- **Hand Watering**

Hand watering means using a combination of hose-end yard sprinklers that have to be moved and the use of a handheld hose, or even using a watering can. For most applications, the first thing to consider is using a sprinkler or spray nozzle that does not produce a fine mist. Fine mist evaporates more quickly and is easily blown out of the area you want to water. Hand watering plants allows you to precisely apply water where it is needed, and control how much is being applied. This is a good option for outdoor potted plants and hanging baskets.

Choosing native plants, assessing water needs, and applying water efficiently will have you on the right path to setting your lawn and garden up for success this spring. If we cultivate good watering habits just as we cultivate our gardens, we can use water to sustain our plants and promote healthy growth while conserving supplies for future use. To learn about more ways to conserve water, please visit www.prairielandsgcd.org.