

# How To Conserve Water In The Garden



If you've ever looked at a browning lawn or bedraggled flowers wilting in the sun you are aware of the most important ingredient of successful gardening - water. Can you have landscaping and still conserve water? Yes, if you pay attention to what and where you plant and follow the guidelines for wise water use in the garden. Two informative water-wise landscape brochures are available free at the Water & Sewer Utility in City Hall. "How to water your garden" and "Rules of Thumb for Water-Wise Gardening" describe how to help your plants thrive while conserving water. Here are a few other considerations for planning and maintaining your garden while being water-wise:

- 💧 Before buying plants read up on their water, sun, and soil needs. Place close together similar water-use plants and design your irrigation plan around these zones. Place high water use plants such as grass, fruit trees, and container plants in the shady areas to help hold the soil moisture longer.
- 💧 Only plant grass where it will be used and enjoyed and try to use grass species that require less water naturally like the Hybrid Bermuda, St. Augustine grass, and Dwarf Tall Fescues. Mix ordinary grass lawns with low-maintenance areas of hardy ground cover like varieties of thyme, yarrow, or chamomile. Install a deck or permeable patios that allow rain to soak into the ground rather than run off.
- 💧 Install an accurate irrigation system like drip irrigation, when possible, to get the water directly to where it is needed. Many native plant species like the California Poppy, California Morning Glory, California Buckeye, and California Pepper tree, require little to no irrigation after they are established (roughly 1-2 years).
- 💧 Instead of a chemical fertilizers, try organic materials like compost, aged/dried manure, or cottonseed meal, but only use these when plants appear pale or stunted. If too much fertilizer is used it can run off into our storm drains and impact the Bay's water quality.
- 💧 Water during non-windy evenings or early mornings to prevent excessive evaporation. Dig troughs around your plants to funnel the water to each plant, and place mulch around the plants to keep soil moisture from evaporating quickly and to reduce weeds. If weeds poke through, pull them immediately. Not only are they unsightly, they steal water from what you are actually trying to grow.
- 💧 Aerate your lawn to allow the water to get down to the plant roots more easily. To check to see if the water is getting down to the roots, stick a long screwdriver into the soil until you hit resistance (where the soil is dry). Just because the ground appears dry on the surface does not mean that it is not moist inches below, where it is needed most.
- 💧 Don't over-water your garden. Water less as summer turns to fall and even less during winter when many plants become dormant. If you are using an irrigation system with an automatic controller make sure it has a rain shut-off option. If you notice runoff, the water is not being absorbed fast enough. You may need to divide your watering time into multiple shorter periods to let the ground soak up a good amount. Always check for permanently wet areas on your lawn. This may be a place where a broken pipe is hidden.