

Saving Water Outdoors

Last Updated Thursday, 27 March 2008

It's Time to Change the Way We Water!

In Albuquerque, we use 40 percent of our drinking water on our yards every year. That's got to change if we're going to meet state-mandated conservation goals and preserve our aquifer for future generations.

Avoid mandatory restrictions — and choose your own days!

Rather than impose mandatory day-of-the-week watering schedules, the Water Authority is putting YOU in control, with "Water by the Numbers." Pick your own days to water, and irrigate your landscape:

- ONCE A WEEK IN MARCH
- TWICE A WEEK IN APRIL AND MAY
- THREE TIMES A WEEK IN JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST
- TWICE A WEEK IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER
- ONCE A WEEK IN NOVEMBER

It's as easy as 1-2-3-2-1!

For an irrigation calculator and detailed info on proper watering techniques, [click here](#).

More ideas for saving water outdoors

- Plant drought resistant trees and plants:

Xeriscape with plants that require less water. These plants can be very attractive and can survive drought better than turf. Rocks, gravel, benches, and deck areas can all be used to creatively decorate the yard.

- Choose an Automatic Irrigation System

An automatic sprinkler system can be set to water the lawn for a specified amount of time. This saves your time and waters the lawn evenly. If you don't have an automatic sprinkling system, set a kitchen timer. A lot of water can be wasted in a short period of time if you forget to turn your sprinklers off. Outdoor faucets can flow at rates as high as 300 gallons per hour.

- Use a Cistern to Collect Rainwater

1,000 square feet of roof or pavement can collect 420 gallons of water from 1 inch of rain. Rooftops or any sloping surface such as a driveway are prime "catchment" areas for rainwater. Store the collected water in a cistern, and siphon

it off to water your garden or wash your car. A plastic or metal garbage can is easily converted to a cistern by attaching a spigot and hose. Locate your cistern close to wherever you plan to use the water, and consider the massive weight of such a tank if you plan to put it on your roof. To filter out leaves and debris, install a removable screen at the entrance to the cistern.

- Spot water

Drier areas require more water than areas where water settles. If necessary, water dry areas by hand.

- Use a soil probe to test soil moisture

Water only when a soil probe shows dry soil or a screwdriver is difficult to push into the soil.

- Water the lawn only when needed

Step on the grass; if it springs back up when you move your foot, it does not need water.

- Don't water the pavement

Position sprinklers so that water lands on the lawn or garden, not in areas where it is not needed. Also avoid watering when it is windy. Wind causes water to evaporate quickly and blows water onto areas where it is not needed. Remember, if it doesn't grow, don't water it!

- Water without waste

Interrupt watering when puddles or runoff occur. This allows the water to penetrate into the soil before resuming irrigation.

- Consider drip irrigation systems around trees and shrubs

Drip systems permit water to flow slowly to roots, encouraging strong root systems. These systems will also cut down evaporation.

- Keep lawn free of weeds

Weeds are water thieves and will rob your plants of water and nutrients. Spot spray or remove weeds as they appear.

- Accept a less than lush lawn

Grass will naturally go dormant during periods of drought, but will readily regenerate when water becomes available. Reduce traffic on stressed turf areas if possible.

- Match fertilizer to the plant requirement

Fertilizer applications require additional water. Excess fertilizer stimulates top growth, often to the detriment of the root system. Learn to accept turf grasses with low water needs.

- Mow as infrequently as possible

Mowing puts the grass under additional stress that requires more water.

- Mow higher than normal

Longer leaf surfaces promote deeper rooting and shade the root zone. Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade in one mowing. Return mulched clippings to the lawn.

- Use a broom to clean the driveway and sidewalk

Sweeping the driveway and sidewalk will get them clean enough without wasting gallons of water.

- Don't let the water run while washing the car

Get the car wet, then turn off the water while you soap the car down using a bucket of soapy water. Turn on the water again for a final rinse. Use the bucket of soapy water on the flower bed or garden.

- Don't use the sprinklers just to cool off or for play

Running through water from a hose or sprinkler is fun but wastes gallons of water.

- Check for leaks in pipes, hoses, and faucet

All leaks cause water to be wasted. Repair or replace any equipment leaking water.

- Cover your swimming pool

Covering a swimming pool will help reduce evaporation. An average sized pool can use about 1,000 gallons of water per month if left uncovered. A pool cover can cut the loss by up to 90%.

- Recycle your pool water

Backwashing or draining your pool into the street is against the Water Conservation Landscaping and Water Waste Ordinance. Use your pool water to irrigate your lawn, plants, trees, and shrubs. Once you have recycled as much water as possible, find your sanitary sewer clean-out. Remove the cap and pump the pool water into the sewer at a rate not to exceed 20 gallons per minute: a faster rate could cause back-up into your house. Pump rentals are available at swimming pool supply stores and equipment rental companies.

- Use shut-off nozzles on hoses

Shut-off nozzles completely turn off the water when you are not using it.

Move sprinkler heads away from curbs or sidewalks.

A mulch, bark, or rock area at least 8 inches wide adjacent to sidewalks and curbs will help eliminate water waste.