

Water News And Notes

Enjoy The Great Outdoors With Less Water

(NAPSA)—Swimming. Running through a sprinkler. Watering garden beds. Washing the car. Warmer weather brings on all sorts of outdoor activities—most of which involve water. Unfortunately for many communities, this is also the time of year when water supplies are stressed the most.

Water shortages that were once common only in the West and Southwest are today spreading across the country. Thirty-six states expect local or regional water shortages within the next six years—a problem compounded by population growth and aging water-delivery systems.

The average family of four uses about 400 gallons of water per day—that's 1,600 drinking glasses full—and 30 percent of that is outdoors. More than half of outdoor water use is for watering lawns and gardens.

In some parts of the country, homeowners use as much as 75 percent of their water outdoors during the growing season. That means now is an ideal time to become more water efficient. Saving water helps protect the future of community water supplies and the environment. It can also save families money on their utility bills.

As you make your way into the sunshine, keep in mind these tips from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program.



1. Give your irrigation system a checkup:

It's estimated that more than 50 percent of landscape water use goes to waste due to evaporation, runoff or overwatering.

- Inspect your irrigation system to find and repair leaks.
- Don't water the sidewalk or street. Adjust sprinklers or hire a professional to get your system back on track.
- Avoid oversaturation. Use soil moisture sensors so your irrigation system operates only when needed.
- Install a weather-based irrigation controller. On a moderate-size lawn, this can save up to 37 gallons of water per day.

2. Water when needed, as needed:

- Water your plants and lawn in the early morning when winds are calm and temperatures are cool.

- Use plants that are native or adapted to your climate in order to reduce outdoor water use by 20 to 50 percent.

- Raise your lawn mower cutting height—longer grass blades shade each other and reduce evaporation.

3. Hire an expert:

- Consider hiring a certified professional to install a water-efficient irrigation system. A professional can also help audit and maintain your existing system.

- Ask if your irrigation professional is a WaterSense partner. Professionals who are certified through a WaterSense-labeled program can help you save water, time and money. WaterSense currently labels certification programs for irrigation system designers and installation/maintenance professionals.

- Visit www.epa.gov/watersense to find a WaterSense irrigation partner in your area.

4. Other ways to save:

- Sweep driveways, sidewalks and steps rather than hosing off.
- Wash the car with water from a bucket rather than a hose, or better yet, take it to a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- When using a hose, control the flow with an automatic shut-off nozzle.
- If you own a swimming pool, consider buying a water-efficient filter. Use a pool cover to reduce evaporation when it's not being used.