

Reduce Your Summer Outdoor Water Use

Summer's rising temperatures often coincide with rising outdoor water use, primarily due to an increase in lawn and landscape watering. In most areas, the amount of water homeowners use to keep their lawns green or gardens lush spikes in the summer—two to four times more water than they use the rest of the year! And those with timed outdoor watering systems often forget to monitor the weather or set their irrigation controllers back in the fall, leading to more overwatering during the cooler months.

Facts About Summertime Overwatering

- Depending on the region, homeowners use between 30 and 60 percent of their water outdoors.
- Experts estimate that 50 percent of the water we use outdoors is wasted due to evaporation, wind, or runoff resulting from overwatering.
- The average American family uses about 320 gallons of water per day. During the hotter months, homes can use about 1,000 gallons of water a day. Some use as much as 3,000 gallons per day - the equivalent of leaving a garden hose running for nearly eight hours!

Simple Tips for Saving Water Outdoors

Homes with automatic irrigation systems and turfgrass lawns can use about 50 percent more water outdoors than those without them. Check your summertime water bill—how does your warmer weather water use compare to winter months? Here are some tips for keeping water use under control:

- **Timing is everything:** Know how much water your landscape actually needs before you set your sprinkler. Generally, it's best to water lawns and landscapes in the early morning and late evening because significant amounts of water can be lost due to wind drift and evaporation during the heat of the day.
- **Get smart:** If your system uses a clock timer, consider upgrading to a rebate-eligible WaterSense labeled Smart Timer. Smart Timers act like a thermostat for your landscape, using local weather data to determine when and how much to water, which reduces waste and improves plant health. Learn more about Smart-Timers at www.epa.gov/watersense/products/controltech.html. To apply for a rebate, go to www.mwdoc.com/rebates.
- **Go with a pro.** Contractors certified through a WaterSense labeled program can audit, install, or maintain home irrigation systems to ensure water isn't wasted. Make sure you ask for credentials.

- ***Tune up your system:*** Inspect irrigation systems and check for leaks and broken or clogged sprinkler heads. Fix sprinkler heads that are broken or spraying on the sidewalk, street, or driveway. This might be the right time to replace inefficient spray heads with rebate-eligible high efficiency rotating nozzles. To learn more about this rebate, go to <http://www.mwdoc.com/rebates>.
- ***Play zone defense:*** When planting, assign areas of your landscape different hydrozones depending on sun/shade exposure, soil and plant types, and type of sprinklers, then adjust your irrigation system or watering schedule based on each zone's specific needs. This helps you avoid overwatering some areas or underwatering others.

There are a number of simple steps you can take to promote a healthier lawn and garden while using less water this summer:

- ***Consider a change:*** Turfgrass is the thirstiest common landscape plant. Many Orange County residents are opting for a landscape change by replacing turfgrass with California Friendly Landscapes. Residential and small commercial customers of participating retail water providers are eligible to receive an incentive of \$2.00 (or more) per square foot of turf removed for qualifying projects. To learn more about this program, go to <http://www.mwdoc.com/services/turf-removal>.
- ***Step on it:*** Grass doesn't always need water just because it's hot out. Step on the lawn, and if the grass springs back, it doesn't need water. An inexpensive soil moisture sensor can also show the amount of moisture at the plant's roots to discourage overwatering.
- ***Leave it long:*** Raise your lawn mower blade. Longer grass promotes deeper root growth, resulting in a more drought-resistant lawn, reduced evaporation, and fewer weeds.
- ***Give your hose a break:*** Sweep driveways, sidewalks, and steps rather than hosing them off. And don't forget to check for leaks at your spigot connection and tighten as necessary.