

## Water-Wise Gardening Tips

By Will Knowles, Creek Side Gardens

Water is our most precious resource on the high plains desert of the Front Range of Colorado. Efficient water usage on our lawns and in our gardens is not only economical and practical, but ecologically we all know it is the right thing to do. Follow the basic water conservation tips below to not only maximize Colorado's limited water supply but will also encourage a healthy, hardy and drought-resistant landscape.

Grass lawns are the most water demanding element of our landscape. There are many aspects to our lawn care and irrigation that may be modified to improve watering conservation.

- Water at night between 6 p.m. and 10 a.m., not in the heat of the day and when the wind is blowing.
- Set your sprinklers to water landscape only, not concrete driveways and sidewalks.
- Skip the normal watering cycle if 1/2 inch or more of rain has fallen the previous day.
- Check your sprinkler system to see how long each zone is scheduled to run and adjust the timer if necessary.
- If watering your lawn with a hose, set a timer to remind you when to move the hose to a different station.
- Aerate your lawn in the spring and fall to relieve soil compaction allowing better water penetration.
- Set your mower at the highest level to allow the longer grass blades to shade themselves.
- Fertilize in the spring and fall, not during the warmest months of the summer.

Flower and vegetable gardens typically need less water than a lawn, but conservation should be applied to them as well.

- Improve your garden soil for better water penetration by adding organic matter like peat moss and compost.
- Check newly planted flowers and vegetable regularly for the first two weeks to help them get established and then gradually reduce water.
- Apply mulch to the surface of the soil to reduce evaporation and retain moisture.
- Use low pressure drip irrigation systems to efficiently apply water to flower and vegetable gardens to the soil where the plants roots can take it up.
- Select and plant flowers that require less water once they are established.

Tree and shrub roots extend out from the tree trunk past the ends of the branches. They will obtain their water best when the water soaks deep into the soil near the feeder roots. Normally, general landscape irrigation will provide adequate water.

Still have questions? Check with the professionals at your favorite independent garden center for advice.