

Drought Survival: Lawn Care

Lawns are the single biggest water user for a typical property. That means they offer the greatest potential for water savings! Here are a few tips to help you reduce your water use and better manage your landscaping.

Watering a Lawn During a Drought

Managing the water that you apply to your lawn is essential.

Here are a few suggestions:

- ✓ **Limit watering to two days per week.** During normal years, lawns require water two days per week in spring and fall, and two to three days per week in the middle of summer. However, during the drought, lawns can survive on considerably less water. The lawn won't look its best, but it will survive.
- ✓ **Use the “cycle and soak” method** of watering to reduce runoff and water waste. Split your watering time into two cycles spaced about an hour apart to allow the water to soak in.
- ✓ **Check your sprinkler heads regularly** to make sure they work properly. Repair broken, crooked or sunken heads and clogged nozzles. Adjust the spray pattern to prevent sprinklers from watering pavement.
- ✓ **Repaid old fan nozzles with high efficiency rotating nozzles** to slow runoff and improve coverage. Check pressure to reduce water waste from misting.
- ✓ **Water between midnight and 6AM** when it is cooler, the wind is calm and there is little evaporation.
- ✓ **Watch your lawn rather than a calendar.** When the grass takes on a blue-gray tone or the grass blades don't spring back after you walk on it, it is time to water.
- ✓ **Hand-water small dry spots** rather than turning up the watering schedule for your whole lawn.
- ✓ **Apply less water to shaded areas.** Lawn areas in the shade (north/east side of the house) will generally require 50 percent less water than lawns on the sunny side of the house.



Maintaining a Lawn During a Drought

Here are some simple maintenance tips that will help your lawn survive the drought.

- ✓ **Mow lawns 2 ½ to 3 inches high** once a week. Taller grass blades promote deeper roots and will shade the soil, resulting in less evaporation.
- ✓ **Use a lawn aerator** to perforate the soil with small holes to increase air, water and nutrients infiltration into the root system and reduce runoff.
- ✓ **Reduce fertilization** and limit to the spring and fall. Actively growing plants use more water, and fertilizers can damage already stressed root systems. Consider using organic fertilizers for increased water savings.
- ✓ **Minimize foot traffic and equipment traffic** on the lawn. Drought stressed turf is more easily damaged by traffic.
- ✓ **Leave clippings on the lawn** as you mow to add nutrients back to the soil

Consider Drought-Friendly Lawn Alternatives

Consider eliminating unused lawn and re-landscaping with permeable hardscape and water-efficient plants- *and get paid for doing it.* The **Lawn Be Gone! Rebate Program** provides rebates of \$1 per square foot for replacing lawn with beautiful, water-efficient options that result in more sustainable and beneficial landscapes. For additional information about the Lawn Be Gone! Rebate Program, Water-Wise Gardening, and other simple steps to conserve, please call BAWSCA at 650-349-3000 or visit <http://www.bawsca.org/>.