

# OUTDOOR

(Information borrowed from sbwater.org, wateruseitwisely.com, bewaterwise.com and calwater.com)

- Low water using plants: In our semi-arid climate, the water requirements of a plant are an important consideration. There are many beautiful, low-water using plants available locally.
- Group plants thoughtfully. When selecting trees, shrubs, ground covers, perennials and annuals for your garden, look for those that naturally grow together and use about the same amount of water.
- Water early in the morning when there is little or no wind and minimal sunlight. Water slowly and thoroughly during cool, windless hours in the early morning before 10 AM or in the late afternoon after 4 PM. High winds blow away the water and prevent proper coverage.
- Improve your soil. Routinely cultivate your soil, incorporating organic matter such as compost. Doing so improves the soil's ability to resist evaporation and retain moisture. Aerate heavy or compacted soil around trees.
- Mulch. A two- to four-inch layer of mulch also evens out temperature extremes, keep soil cool on hot days and warm on cool days. It also prevents soil from crusting, allowing better water penetration. Take a cue from nature and choose one of many organic mulches that add great visual texture to your landscape, such as shredded bark or chips, wood grindings, compost, aged sawdust or even low-growing ground cover. Inorganic mulches, such as gravel or rock, let the most water in and are frequently used with plants susceptible to crown rot.
- Plant trees. Trees help to lower air and soil temperatures, reducing plant and soil moisture loss.
- Group container plants. Arrange containers so they shade one another. During droughts or periods of drying winds, place them in the deepest shade they can tolerate. Wet the entire rootball; double pot by setting small pots inside larger ones with a layer of sand or gravel between. Top-dress pots with a layer of mulch over the soil.
- Reduce size of lawn: Lawns can be an attractive and useful part of a landscape, but are not considered "sustainable landscaping" due to the large inputs of water, labor and often chemicals to keep them healthy. Many people find that even while reducing the lawn area, they can still meet the need for children's or pet's play area. A smaller lawn requires less labor and resources. When mowing the lawn, clippings can be left on the surface as mulch. Although there are no truly "drought tolerant" turf grasses, some varieties do use less water.
- Go Native: Native plants are low-water, fertilizer and pesticide users. They require little maintenance and they provide habitat for local wildlife. Native deep rooting bushes can decrease erosion with little maintenance.

- **Adjust with the Season:** Change automatic irrigation system settings to reflect the season. When it is raining, turn the system off. Or ask your local purveyor about ET irrigation Controllers.
- **Check for Leaks in Pipes, Hoses, Faucets and Couplings:** Leaks outside the house may not seem as unbearable since they don't mess up the floors or drive you crazy at night. But they can be just as wasteful as leaks in the line from the water meter—even more wasteful. Monitor your sprinkler heads, and adjust the sprinkler heads as needed. Periodically check irrigation lines for leaks. Check all sprinkler heads and drip emitters while system is on at least twice per year for breaks and misalignment.
- **Deep-soak Your Lawn:** When you do water your lawn, do it just long enough for water to seep down to the roots, where it won't evaporate quickly, and where it will do the most good. A light sprinkling, which sits on the surface, will simply evaporate and be wasted. A slow, steady fall of water is the best way to irrigate your lawn.
- **Install a Water Efficient Irrigation System:** Consider a water saving drip irrigation system that provides a slow, steady supply of water to garden shrubs, etc. Use separate irrigation valves for each type of planting so individual scheduling is possible. If the pressure in your area is high, install a pressure regulator to reduce water usage, and minimize sprinkler problems.
- **Aerate your soil and lawn:** Over time, soil compacts and forms an impenetrable surface. Aeration breaks up the hard surface so the water can soak in to give your plants more oxygen, nutrients and water. And you'll see less water running down the street.
- **Create a hydrozone in one area of your yard.** A hydrozone is where all the plants have similar water needs so you can water efficiently.