

## Conserving Water in the Landscape

The time to plan for water conservation in the yard and landscape is now! This column will review a number of options to reduce extra water use which could tax our home or community water system and our pocketbook.

### LAWN CARE

Choose now which parts of the lawn will be high maintenance, medium maintenance, or low maintenance.

-  The more fertilizer the more water.
-  The high the maintenance level the more water.
-  The thicker the lawn and the shorter the mowing height, the more water.
-  The more frequent and shallower the watering the more water.

Making the decision now about which areas of the yard to maintain at which level will help keep water use in line. Deciding in mid-summer to reduce watering on a high maintenance yard can be a disaster.

I had a good friend in Frontier County years ago who struggled to keep up about an acre of yard because his wife demanded it. I suggested that he spend more effort on the 3,000 square feet between the house and garage and just keep the rest regularly mowed. His wife raved about the improvements, while he was spending 1/4 the time, 1/4 the water, and 1/4 the money on the effort.

The part of the lawn being watered needs 1-inch of water per week in 80-90 degree weather and 2-inches per week in 100 degree weather. Try to put this on in one application and not more than two applications. Shallower and more frequent watering results in shallower rooting and more evaporation of water.

Mowing height of 2.5 to 3-inches can reduce soil temperatures and water use by plants. If you mow weekly clipping collection is unnecessary as clippings supply needed nutrients and ground cover protection.

### LANDSCAPE PLANTINGS

Ask yourself now if the garden is really going to be used and cared for throughout the season. If it is going to be neglected later keep the size and effort down from the start. Space plants out well and use mulches to reduce water usage.

Reduce the number of new plantings to care for. A landscape is a work in progress over the life of the home, not an instant garden catalog photo opt. We are going to need plenty of water and effort to take care of existing landscape plants and trees this year due to recovery from last summer's water shortages. Don't over-extend your resources of time, water, or investment.

Using native plants and other drought tolerant plants in your landscape can reduce water demand a good deal. Plants like yarrow, pussytoes, sedum, prairie clovers, daylilies, etc are examples of perennials which are quite drought tolerant. Plant like plants together, a few high requirement plants can force you to water an entire bed more frequently. Again the use of mulches is key to weed control and water use efficiency.

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