

OUTDOOR WATER CONSERVATION TIPS



*Water deeply but **less** frequently to reach the root zone and allow your lawn to absorb the water. Early morning watering reduces evaporation loss.*

TIPS FOR A HEALTHY, GREEN LAWN:

- 1. Build healthy soil!**
Soil rich in organic matter will better withstand pests and drought conditions. By applying organic fertilizers— you will use less in the long run and not pollute our lakes, streams, and bay with pesticides.
- 2. Reduce soil compaction**
Lawns need to breathe and have proper drainage. Using mechanical aerators, top dressing, and overseeding to reduce soil compaction.
- 3. Keep grass height at 2”-3”** . Mow your lawn with the blades set high— grass that is 2-3” will promote a healthier root system and help retain soil moisture.
- 4. Leave grass clippings on the lawn** Dry grass clippings will act as a natural fertilizer and mulch.
- 5. Water deeply and less often.** Watering less often but for longer periods of time will encourage a healthier, more drought-tolerant lawn. Watering in the morning will reduce evaporation and help prevent disease.

Smart Watering

Having a green lawn in the summertime is a priority for many people. The nice weather invites you outside to garden, play, barbecue, and entertain. Trying to achieve that green lawn, however, can sometimes lead to over-watering and damage to roots. Outdoor watering can be a burden on the drinking water supply during the dry summer months, as water use doubles. It is estimated that nearly half of this water is wasted; lost to evaporation, runoff and over-watering- so it's important that, when you do water, you water smart! This means **watering during the appropriate time of day, for the appropriate amount of time, and paying attention to your lawn's watering needs.**

Backyard Habitat Mentor Program

The Bellingham Backyard Habitat Mentor program provides a free consultation by trained volunteers on how to create a wildlife friendly yard. The consultation includes information on selecting and identifying native plants that attract birds, butterflies, amphibians, and reptiles, as well as identification of invasive plant species and removal tech-

How much water does my lawn need? Typically most Northwest lawns need only 1-inch of water *per week*. To find out how long it takes your sprinkler to supply this amount, simply set out several containers (tuna cans work great) throughout the lawn, and run a sprinkler for 15 minutes. Using a ruler, measure the average depth in each can. From this you should be able to tell how long and how often to water each week.

What kind of grass do I have and how often do I need to mow it? The prominent kind of grass west of the Cascades is ryegrass, (often mixed with fine fescue) or bentgrass which is common in older lawns. Grass height should be about 2 to 3-inches high, so mow with your

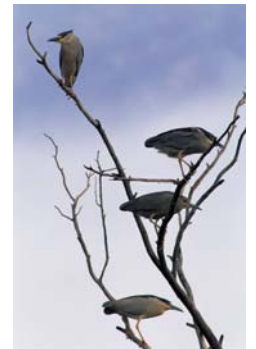
blade setting high. This will promote longer and healthier roots. Leave the grass clippings on your lawn when it's dry. As these clippings break down, they add nutrients and moisture to the soil, resulting in a healthier lawn.

When is the best time to water my lawn? How long should I water for? The best time to water your lawn is in the mornings between 7 and 10am. Watering during this time reduces the amount of water lost to evaporation, and minimizes the potential for fungus to grow from watering in the evening. Watering your lawn less frequently will help your lawn grow deep roots that will enable it to withstand the dry summers and droughts typical in this area.

niques. Information on how to add features such as water, shelter and nesting sites to increase wildlife in your yard is also provided.

Benefits of Landscaping for wildlife:

- Provides food and shelter for local songbirds and other wildlife
- Reduces the need for water and chemical pest control
- Increases the biodiversity of our urban area



For more information about the Bellingham Backyard Habitat Program, contact the Parks Volunteer Coordinator:
Phone: 360-778-7136
Email: parkswvolunteer@cob.org

Rain Barrels: A Gardener's Answer to Dry Summer Weather

Rainwater collection is not a new concept. For thousands of years, people have been using collected rainwater in areas where water is scarce or unsafe to drink. This simple technology continues to be used today around the world to provide water for drinking and irrigation. Collection systems range from 10,000-gallon cisterns to 40-gallon rain barrels.

Our water source, Lake Whatcom, supplies water to approximately 95,000 people. From May through September, the City receives only 5 inches of rainfall, which is only 1/5 of the total rainfall for the entire year! As the City's population continues to grow, Chinook salmon listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, and the climate

changes affecting Northwest rainfall, make water conservation something every one of us needs to think about and practice.

Rain barrels are an excellent way to practice water conservation. Plants love soft, chemical-free rainwater, and by having and using a rain barrel, you are doing your part to conserve this finite resource. Rainwater can be used for several purposes: watering your lawn or garden, washing cars or pets, and watering indoor plants. The water in your rain barrel however, is NOT SAFE TO DRINK. Do not use this water for drinking, washing or cooking.

Rain barrels are a dual-purpose application— they are a great

water conservation as well as stormwater management tool. Collecting water is an easy way to conserve water and save money on your water bill.

When purchasing or constructing your own rain barrel consider the following:

- Use a tight-fitting lid and screen to keep leaves, debris, mosquitoes, animals and children out of the water
- Use an overflow device such as a hose to direct excess water away from your house and foundation and into a flowerbed or garbage can for extra storage
- Check the rain barrel frequently to ensure intake and overflows are not blocked
- Choose dark colored barrels to reduce algae growth or paint white or translucent barrels



There are many different styles and sizes of rain barrels available to meet each person's preference and needs



More information on rainwater harvesting can be found at:

www.harvesth20.com

www.arcsa.org

Rain Barrel Resources

Collected Rainwater can be used to:

- Water the garden
- Water your lawn
- Water your indoor plants
- Wash your car
- Wash your pets
- Fill your iron

Rain barrel retailers can be found locally and all across the United States, the internet has over one hundred websites to access and order from. The city also offers workshops to water customers on how to build rain barrels and water conservation education. Rain barrels can be constructed for about \$15-\$30. Materials can be purchased at any hardware store, and there are local suppliers in the area. The city published a Rain Barrel Guide that can be found at www.cob.org. Rain barrels can also be purchased through the city for \$25. The 55-gallon barrels come complete with a hose bib and an overflow valve. For more information about the city's rain barrel program or to purchase, contact Public Works Operations at 778-7700 or waterconservation@cob.org

How much water can a rain barrel collect from my roof?

Remember that one inch of rain falling on one-square foot (sf) surface equals .6 gallons of water.

If you have a 1,000 sf surface, you could potentially collect up to **600 gallons** of water!



Public Works Operations Phone: 360-778-7700
2221 Pacific Street Fax: 360-778-7701
Bellingham, WA 98229 E-mail: waterconservation@cob.org

XERISCAPE!

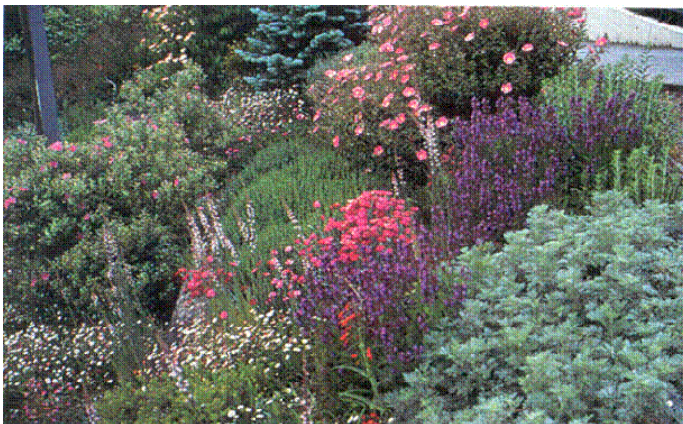


Orin and Althea Soest Herbaceous Demonstration Garden, UW Horticulture Center

For more information about Xeriscaping or planting native plants, visit or call your local nursery to see if they sell drought-tolerant or native plants.

The following websites are also great resources:

- www.xeriscape.org
- www.wnps.org/landscaping/plantselect.html
- <ftp://dnr.metrokc.gov/dnr/library/2003/gonative.pdf>



For those who dread mowing the lawn and trying to keep it green, one alternative is to remove the lawn altogether and xeriscape instead. **Xeriscape** is a concept for **saving water in landscaped areas**. Planting slow-growing, drought tolerant plants can conserve water and reduce the cost of maintaining your lawn or garden. Xeriscaping uses plants native to the area or region that have adapted to endure drought. Choosing appropriate plants for your garden, grouping them together with other plants that have the same watering needs, and planting them in areas that are favorable to their growth are all part of a xeriscape. In addition to saving water, xeriscaping also saves you money and gives you time to enjoy

your garden. Before you begin the transformation in your yard, consider the following steps:

1. Plan your garden

Take some time to look around your existing landscape, and determine what aspects of it you want to keep, and what parts you want to change. What is the sun exposure in your yard? Which areas are hot and sunny? Moist and shady? Are there high-traffic areas? Sketching or writing out your vision will help you to plan a garden that will thrive when planted appropriately.

2. Improve your soil

Amending your soil with nutrients and water will do wonders for your garden. Using organic material, compost or manure will improve your soils health dramatically- your plants will show their appreciation by establishing strong, healthy root systems.

3. Group plants together by watering needs

Understanding the soil requirements, sun exposure, and watering needs of each plant is important when planning a

water-efficient landscape. Plants should be grouped according to similar water needs, so as not to compete with each other.

4. Select native or drought-tolerant plants

The Northwest has hundreds of beautiful native plants that have adapted to our wet winters and dry summers. Planting these plants will maximize your low-water use garden, as well as restore nature's balance with beautiful native plants.

5. Maintain your garden

When first planted, all plants need supplemental watering to become established (1-2 years). Once established, little if any supplemental watering will be needed. Regular weeding, maintenance, and mulch applications will reduce competition for water, and have your xeriscape looking great!

Water-Efficient Gardening Tips:

- Plant in the fall and early spring to give plants a chance to develop healthy roots before the dry season.
- Cover exposed soil with mulch to slow evaporation.