



Waterwise Gardening

Why we should be concerned with use of water

Gardens and lawns can use up to 50% of household water in the summer. Reduce the amount of lawn where possible, and when not, take measures to have a green lawn by raising the height of the blades to promote a thicker layer which will smother weed growth. Refrain from overhead sprinkling which does not encourage deep root growth of grass. In very hot, dry weather grass goes dormant but will usually recover when cooler weather prevails.

City water rates will not decrease. Install water barrels under downspouts to conserve rainwater. Residents using well water have natural restrictions. Some areas use 'grey water' for gardens. Precipitation patterns are changing and less predictable. Climate change - more wind, tornadoes, forest fires etc

Tips for Waterwise Gardening

Plan a garden by grouping plants with similar water requirements

Choose plant material to match the site. Lower growing tough plants that can withstand somewhat infertile soil will cope with hot, dry locations, and require less frequent maintenance.

Mulch plants to conserve moisture. Can be compost, shredded/chopped bark or leaves, stones, straw, grass clippings, cocoa hulls [caution for dog owners].

Water deeply and at root level - frequent light, sprinkling is wasteful and will only encourage shallow root systems. Either early in the morning or later in evening - use a wand and don't wet the foliage.

Too much water ?

For overly wet areas, improve drainage - possibly convert to a bog garden

Seasonally waterlogged areas difficult to landscape. Acceptance that some areas that cannot be planted

One solution might be to create a 'dry' creekbed with attractive stones but no plants

Rain shadows

Under the eaves

Planting under roof overhangs will require constant watering - set back any plants away from house wall and overhang

Partial rain shadows

Under large, mature evergreens - nothing much will grow - certainly not grass.

Trees will absorb most of rainfall

Mulching better than plantings

Examples of plants with low water requirements

Annuals - California poppy, Cleome, Cosmos, Gaillardia, Portulaca, Rudbekia

Perennial – Achillea, Agastache, Anthemis, Bergenia , Dianthus, Dictamnus, Geranium [cranesbill], Lychnis coronaria, Sedum, Solidago

Ornamental Grasses – Festuca , Feather Reed Grass, Stipa

Some plants with high water requirements

Annuals : Impatiens , Begonia, Snapdragon, Viola, Torenia

Perennial: Astilbe, Delphinium, , Heuchera, Hosta, Siberian Iris, Ligularia, Monkshood, Phlox, Peony, Meadow Rue

Planters and containers

Avoid small containers – these need regular , frequent watering

Various water absorbing products [polymers] can be added to the potting mix

Loam can be added to potting mix, will improve stability of taller plants, but make the actual pot heavier

Smaller containers can be ‘double’ potted with some moss between the two layers of pot.

Think about placement of pots within the garden area – avoiding direct sun in the afternoon.

Suggested reading:

Waterwise Gardening by Lauren Springer ISBN 0-671-799-0

Creating the Praire Xeriscape By Sara Williams ISBN 0-88880-357-5

Gardening with Short Growing Seasons by Graham Saunders ISBN 978-0-9812492-0-9

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