Conserving a Vital Resource

Outdoor Water Use

Save water, save money

More than 50 percent of water used on lawns and gardens is wasted. Over the course of a year, that's like letting your garden hose run continuously for three days.

Too much of a good thing

Watering too much or too little is the cause of many common plant problems. You can have healthier plants, save money on water bills and conserve precious water by learning to give your lawn and garden just what is needed, and no more.

Water deeply and infrequently

Most plants do best if the soil is allowed to partially dry out between watering. For lawns, a loss of shine or footprints remaining indicates that it's time to water. Vegetables and other annuals need water at the first sign of wilting. Native perennials ideally suited to central Ohio soil and weather conditions only need water if they remain droopy after temperatures cool in the evening. Trees and shrubs typically don't need watering once their roots are fully established, except in very dry conditions.

Moisten the entire root zone

Watering deeply builds deeper, healthier root systems. To check if you are watering deeply enough, use a spade an hour after watering to see if water is getting deep into the soil.

Make every drop count

Easy ways to lower water bills and get more water to plants include:

- Build soil with compost and mulch to hold water and reduce evaporation
- Choose native plants; once established they can thrive on just rainfall
- Soaker hoses used on beds can save 50 percent or more compared with sprinklers
- Water lawns separately from other plants; direct sprinklers away from pavement
- If water puddles, stop watering a while then restart so the water has time to soak in
- Water early in the morning or in the evening; 50 percent of the water evaporates during midday watering

Use automatic irrigation systems efficiently

Automatic systems can waste a lot of water or be efficient, depending on settings and maintenance.

- Install a rain shutoff device
- Adjust the watering schedule throughout the season – plants need a lot less water in May and September than they do in July and August
- Look for leaks or heads that are plugged or misdirected on a monthly basis
- Have a professional test, repair and adjust the system annually

Put rain water to use

Rain water rushes off roofs, pavement and compacted soil, carrying pollution to the source of our drinking water – our streams and rivers. You can help slow the runoff and filter the stormwater by:

- Collecting water in a rain barrel for later use to water lawn and plants
- Directing runoff into a rain garden
- Using open pavers, bricks, gravel or other pavement options that let rain through, into the soil
- Planting native trees, shrubs and groundcover to slow and filter runoff and stabilize soil

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