



University of California / Agriculture and Natural Resources
Yolo County Master Gardeners
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10 Tips for Saving Water in the Home Landscape

1. **Prioritize your plants-** Determine which plants are most susceptible to water stress. High on the list should be plants that are valuable in terms of replacement cost, prominence in the landscape and enjoyment.
 - **High priority** - trees and shrubs (especially those that are young and planted in an exposed site). Large, mature shade trees and shrubs can be left alone unless the drought is severe and the trees begin to wilt, or the root systems have been recently disturbed.
 - **Medium to high priority** - perennials, fruit and nut trees, small fruits and vegetables; turf that is less than one year old.
 - **Low priority** - annual flowers and herbs, ornamental grasses, established turf. These are usually less expensive and more easily replaced.
2. **Irrigate early-** Less water loss occurs from evaporation and wind drift in the early morning hours because temperatures are cooler and there is less wind early in the day.
3. **Know your soil-** The type of soil in your landscape largely determines how often you should water. Clay soils hold more water than sandier ones; they can go longer between waterings than sandy soils.
4. **Mulch-** Apply 2 to 4 inches of mulch around plants to keep weeds down, conserve soil moisture and moderate soil temperatures. Mulching minimizes water evaporation from the soil surface, reducing the need to irrigate. Keep mulch 3 to 4 inches away from the trunk or stem of the plant to prevent rot.
5. **Control weeds-** Weeds can out-compete cultivated garden plants for water and nutrients.
6. **Add organic matter-** When possible, add organic matter (compost) to your soil. This will improve the water-holding capacity during dry weather and promote good drainage during wet weather.
7. **Don't fertilize-** Or if you do, apply a low-nitrogen fertilizer. Fertilizing stimulates growth which increases water needs.
8. **Avoid runoff and puddling-** by cycling irrigations. Let sprinklers run for 10 minutes then shut them off for 10 minutes, allowing the water to absorb into the ground.
9. **Use a broom to clean driveways, sidewalks and steps** - Using a hose to clean can waste hundreds of gallons of water.
10. **Select water-efficient plants-**When buying new plants, choose low water users adapted to our climate. Keep in mind that all plants require regular watering to become established, including California natives.

References:

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/YCMG/files/184804.pdf>

Landscapes

Water Conservation Tips for the Home Lawn and Garden is a UC ANR publication that describes how to reduce water use and at the same time have a lovely and enjoyable garden. (PDF 93kb)<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8036.pdf>

Water-Smart Landscapes from the US EPA describes how to have a beautiful, healthy yard while using less water. (PDF)http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/docs/water-efficient_landscaping_508.pdf

Water Efficient Plants

The Arboretum All-Stars are 100 easy to grow, water-efficient plants selected by the UC Davis Arboretum horticultural staff and tested in our region.

http://www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum_all_stars.aspx

Vegetable Gardening

Suggestions for home vegetable garden management during a drought include valuable information on critical watering periods for numerous vegetable crops. (PDF 20kb)

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/sacmg/files/183393.pdf>

Fruit Trees

This document describes the best ways to care for fruit trees in a drought, with valuable tips on when and how to water and thin fruit (PDF 95kb)<http://ucanr.edu/sites/sacmg/files/183723.pdf>

Lawns

Managing Turf Grasses During Drought is a comprehensive and detailed UC publication that addresses situations such as the ones we are currently facing. (PDF 421kb)

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/sacmg/files/182387.pdf>

Lawn Watering Quick Tip<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/QT/lawnwateringcard.html>

Helpful websites

UC Guide to Healthy Lawns provides extensive information about growing a healthy lawn. From UC IPM Online, the UC Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program.

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/TOOLS/TURF/index.html>

The Sacramento Tree Foundation offers excellent in-depth tree planting and watering guidance for our area. <http://www.sactree.com/pages/1>

River-Friendly Landscaping is an environmentally friendly way of gardening. RFL practices conserve water, reduce yard waste, and prevent pollution of air and local rivers. Use the River Friendly benefits calculator to see how much water, time and money can be saved by creating a river-friendly landscape. <http://www.msa.saccounty.net/sactostormwater/RFL/default.asp>.

Reviewed by Judy McClure, UC Master Gardener Program Coordinator.

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