

# Water Saving Outside the Home



## Changing Habits: Outdoor Water Use

Water is one of our most precious resources. Because it flows so easily from our faucets, most of us don't appreciate its value. As a result, many of us become water wasters especially when it comes to outdoor water use. Watering the lawn and garden, washing the car, hosing off the driveway and walks, all help to place a big demand on municipal water systems. Typically, at least 40 per cent of water consumed by households is used outdoors. You can reduce your outdoor water consumption by taking a few simple steps. So tighten those taps, cease those sprinkles and use water wisely.

Be water-wise when using water outside the home. Use these suggestions to help make every drop count.

- Lawn and garden watering during our hot, dry summers consumes tremendous amounts of precious water. Much of this water is wasted by over watering or watering at the wrong time of the day. Water the lawn and garden early in the morning or in the evening to reduce evaporation losses. Remember, evaporation robs both you and the lawn. Water evaporates quickly on hot and windy days. As much as 30 per cent of water used can be lost to evaporation by watering lawn during midday. If you don't have an automatic timer on your sprinkler, use a kitchen timer to remind you to turn off the water. Buy a rain gauge to see how much water your lawn or garden is getting so you don't over water.
- Water the lawn only when the ground is dry, 2.5 centimetres to five centimetres (one to two inches) of water applied once per week should be sufficient. Give the lawn a good deep soaking when you water. This encourages root systems to grow more deeply making the plants more drought resistant.
- Make sure the sprinkler or hose is appropriately placed so only the lawn gets watered. Sidewalks and driveways won't grow anything. Use a sprinkler that does not throw water droplets high in the air. Sprinklers producing large droplets delivered in a flat pattern are more efficient than fine sprays thrown up in the air. Repair or replace leaking hoses and sprinklers. Install an adjustable shut-off nozzle on your hose. When finished with the hose, shut the tap off at the house to avoid leaks. Make sure that rubber washers and hose connectors are in good shape. Soft, wet spots on your lawn around the underground sprinkler could indicate a leak that is being absorbed into the ground.
- Install efficient irrigation systems such as drip irrigation, soil soakers and efficient sprinkler systems. Install a drip irrigation watering system in your garden and around your trees. These systems consist of very narrow tubes buried at the base of plants being irrigated. Water is delivered very slowly through the tubes directly to the roots, thereby eliminating water wastage from evaporation and runoff. Slow, direct drip irrigation on shrubs and flower beds saves water and keeps foliage dry, preventing disease. It is estimated that a 60 per cent saving in outside watering can be achieved by using drip irrigation.
- Use a broom rather than a hose to clean up leaves, dirt and grass clippings on decks, sidewalks, driveways and other paved areas. Don't water the street and sidewalks;
- Collect rainwater for reuse in the garden whenever possible.
- When washing the car, use a bucket of water. Don't run the hose needlessly when washing the car. Save the hose for final rinsing only.
- Don't scalp the grass. Keep the lawnmower set at a height of five to 7.5 centimetres. Taller grass encourages the roots to grow deeper and grass blades to hold moisture longer than with a closely clipped lawn, also discourages weed growth. Pull weeds to decrease competition for water.
- Water trees and shrubs thoroughly. They have extensive root systems that require less watering than other plants in the landscape. Don't use your sprinkler system just to water thirsty plants and dry spots, water them by hand.

Outdoor watering uses a minimum 35 litres. A single lawn sprinkler spraying 19 litres per minute uses 50 per cent more water in just one hour than a combination of 10 toilet flushes, two 5-minute showers, two dishwasher loads and a full load of clothes.



- Fertilize only as needed, more is not necessarily better. Excess fertilizer washing off lawns is a major source of stormwater pollution. Over-fertilization requires more watering and mowing. Select slow-release fertilizers; they are kinder to the environment and they are more cost effective.
- Considering alternatives to the conventional lawn. Consider using the Xeriscape landscaping principles which include preplanning and design, selecting the right plants, analyzing the soil, using practical turf areas, installing efficient irrigation and using mulch and proper maintenance. Landscape with drought-tolerant ornamental grasses, plants and trees. Group plants together based on similar water needs. Try growing native plants around the yard. Rock gardens arranged with drought-tolerant shrubs and perennials can be used to reduce lawn area, particularly on southern exposures. Grass turf requires 30 to 50 per cent more water than shrubs and other groundcover.
- Mulch in all appropriate places at a depth of three inches. Mulch holds in moisture, protecting plant root systems from drying out between rain showers. Other benefits include reduced weed growth, prevention of erosion, and better penetration of air and moisture into the soil. Mulches can be made from compost, bark, manure with straw, lawn clippings, wood chips, gravel or stone.
- Cover pools to prevent evaporation. Check the pool system's shutoff valve, which works automatically, to see if it is malfunctioning and causing a continuous cycle of water to be pumped in and then drained out. If the water level stays higher than normal and it overflows when people are using it, call your plumber.
- Service Connecting Line: If you find a soft, wet spot on your lawn or hear the sound of running water outside your house, you may have a leak in the service line to your house. Water soaks into the ground, causing the soft spots. Close the main shutoff valve. If the sound of running water continues, the outside service line could be leaking.

### ***Make Every Drop Count***

Reducing water waste in the home can be simple. As communities wrestle with the problems of providing adequate water supplies, it is becoming important that we use the water available to use as efficiently as possible. These conservation suggestions are only a few of the measures which have been shown to reduce water wastage.

Your participation is needed to make water conservation work in your community. Please help make every drop count.

**For more information contact  
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