



## William T. Kemper Center for Home Gardening

Visit us on the Web: [www.gardeninghelp.org](http://www.gardeninghelp.org)

### Green and Sustainable: Water Conservation Options for Home Gardeners

The decrease of America's water resources due to disappearing lakes and reservoirs, population growth, and drought has increased the need for more efficient ways of using water. Outside water use accounts for approximately 80% of water used during the summer months. The following information provides suggestions for areas in which the responsible home gardener can help make a huge impact on water conservation.

#### PLANT SELECTION & MAINTENANCE

- Landscape using drought tolerant plants or methods of planting.
- Naturescaping is a method using native plants which are better adapted for local weather and soil conditions. For more information visit [Naturescaping](#)
- Xeriscaping is a method using plants that require little moisture, usually succulents.
- Container gardening is also a good method which uses less water.
- For additional information on plant types and selection visit [PlantFinder](#) or [Plants of Merit](#)

#### MULCH

- Use around plants to aid moisture retention and reduce surface evaporation.
- Select a type of mulch that is best suited for different crops. For more information visit [Mulches](#)

LAWNS can be high consumers of water use and maintenance.

- Consider reducing the lawn area of your yard and selecting grasses that require less moisture.
- Raise your mower height to ensure survival during drought or extreme heat and do not bag clippings to help retain moisture.
- Allow your lawn to go dormant during mid-summer as a way to ensure survival of cool season grasses.
- Know when to water your lawn. The best time is 6:00 to 8:00 a.m. when evaporation is at a minimum.
- For more information on grass selection and maintenance visit [Lawns: Planting and Renovation](#) or [Lawns: Maintenance](#)

IRRIGATION SYSTEMS provide greater efficiency in watering.

- Use low pressure or low volume systems such as drip irrigation or soaker hoses, not oscillating sprayers. This allows for less evaporation and more direct watering at the root.
- Use a system with rain sensors to prevent unnecessary watering.
- Check your system for overspray to keep water loss at a minimum.

UTILIZE STORMWATER RUNOFF

- Redirect downspouts toward your plants, trees and shrubs or use porous materials for walkways and driveways.
- Rain barrels can be used to collect and store runoff from your rooftop. Use of rain barrels can save as much as 1,300 gallons of water during peak months of the summer. For more information visit [Rain barrels](#)
- A rain garden is a natural or man-made depression in your landscape used to capture and soak up runoff from your rooftop, driveways or walkways. Rain gardens can aid in water conservation and quality. For more information see publication: *Native Plant Rain Gardens*. 2004. Missouri Department of Conservation. Missouri Department of Agriculture or visit [Rain Gardens](#)

START A COMPOST PILE for use when planting to provide additional water-holding organic matter. For more information visit [Composting Yard Waste](#)

CHECK HOSES and outside faucets for leaks and repair as needed.

GREY WATER is wastewater from bathtubs, sinks, washing machines and dishwashers. It can account for 60% of outflow from your home. Check your city codes and consider rerouting to use as a source for watering your yard. For more information visit [Grey Water Reuse](#)

GET THE COMMUNITY involved. Support your local government to develop new laws that promote water conservation and encourage your school systems to teach this ethic among students.

**The information in this factsheet is adapted from the following sources:**

*Conserve Water Outdoors*. 2008. Park & Co. <http://www.wateruseitwisely.com>

*Grey Water Reuse*. 2001-2008. ToolBase Services. NAHB Research Center. <http://www.toolbase.org>

*Home Lawn Watering Guide*. Fact sheet G6720. Brad S. Fresenburg and John H. Dunn. March 2004. University of Missouri. MU Extension.

*Water Conservation and Agriculture Water Management*. 2008. National Water Program. USDA CSREES. <http://www.usawaterquality.org>

*Healthy Landscapes*. 2008. University of Rhode Island. <http://www.uri.edu/ce/healthylandscapes/rainbsources.html>

*Lawns Factsheet*. Center for Home Gardening. Missouri Botanical Garden. University Extension.

*Mulches* Factsheet. May 1993. Center for Home Gardening. Missouri Botanical Garden. University Extension.

*Naturescaping* Factsheet. January 1997. Center for Home Gardening. Missouri Botanical Garden. University Extension.

*Native Plant Rain Gardens*. 2004. Missouri Department of Conservation. Missouri Department of Agriculture.