

The Drought – Making a Difference Outdoors

Water is a critical part of California’s way of life. Our economy, our environment and our day-to-day lifestyle need water to flourish. But our water is limited--especially this year. The lack of rain and snow mean that our water supply will be challenged to meet the state's needs. Conservation will help us stretch the water that we do have.

California is suffering from a drought so we cannot afford to waste any water. The good news is there are lots of simple ways to reduce the amount of water that we use at home, both inside and outside. If we all work together, we can make a difference for California’s future.

Outdoors

Most Californians think that they use more water indoors than outdoors. Typically, the opposite is true. In some areas, 50% or more of the water we use daily goes on lawns and outdoor landscaping. There are lots of ways to save water at home, but reducing the water you use outdoors can make the biggest difference of all. Here are a few easy ways to change the way you use water outside your home.

Know the Basics

- Water early in the morning or later in the evening when temperatures are cooler. Save: 25 gallons/each time you water
- Check your sprinkler system frequently and adjust sprinklers so only your lawn is watered and not the house, sidewalk, or street. Save: 15-12 gallons/each time you water
- Choose a water-efficient irrigation system such as drip irrigation for your trees, shrubs, and flowers. Save: 15 gallons/each time you water.
- Water deeply but less frequently to create healthier and stronger landscapes.
- Put a layer of mulch around trees and plants to reduce evaporation and keep the soil cool. Organic mulch also improves the soil and prevents weeds. Save: 20-30 gallons/each time you water/1,000 sq. ft.
- Plant drought-resistant trees and plants. Save: 30- 60 gallons/each time you water/1,000 sq. ft

Don't Overwater

One easy way to cut down how much water you use outdoors is to learn how much water your landscaping actually needs in order to thrive. Overwatering is one of the most common mistakes people make.

Get Smart

If you really want to be a sophisticated water user, invest in a weather-based irrigation controller—or a smart controller. These devices will automatically adjust the watering time and frequency based on soil moisture, rain, wind, and evaporation and transpiration rates. Check with your local water agency to see if there is a rebate available for the purchase of a smart controller.

Know Your Climate

One way to save water outdoors is to plant the right plants for your climate. Here are some tools to help you learn how to be a water-wise gardener:

- Explore the Save Our Water Water-Wise Garden Tool to learn what plants and flowers will flourish in your neighborhood.
- Sunset Magazine's Plant Finder is another great tool.
- Learn more about gardening in a Mediterranean climate.

Outdoor Cleanup

Water is often a go-to tool for outdoor clean-up jobs.

- Use a broom to clean driveways, sidewalks and patios. Save: 8-18 gallons /minute.
- Wash cars/boats with a bucket, sponge, and hose with self-closing nozzle. Save: 8-18 gallons/minute.
- Invest in a water broom. If you have to use water to clean up outside, a water broom will attach to your hose but uses a combination of air and water pressure to aid cleaning. Water brooms can use as little as 2.8 gallons per minute (gpm) to remove dirt, food spills, leaves, and litter from concrete and asphalt while a standard hose typically uses 5 to 20 gpm.

For more information on ways to save water outdoors, visit saveourh2o.org

**To find out more about the Water Board's work to address the drought, see:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml**



Fact Sheet