



# DROUGHT FACT SHEET #2:

## Outdoor Water Conservation Tips Prior to a Drought

### GENERAL

- Check your well pump periodically. If the automatic pump turns on and off while water is not being used, you have a leak.
- Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs, and trees. Once established, plants adapted to your local climate do not need water as frequently and usually will survive a dry period without watering. Small plants require less water to become established. Group plants together based on similar water needs.
- Install irrigation devices that are the most water efficient for each use, such as micro and drip irrigation, and soaker hoses.
- Use mulch to retain moisture in the soil. Mulch also helps control weeds that compete with landscape plants for water.
- Avoid purchasing recreational water toys that require a constant stream of water.
- Avoid installing ornamental water features (such as fountains) unless they use re-circulated water.
- Consider rainwater harvesting where practical.
- Contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardener and your water provider for information and assistance.

### LAWN CARE

- Position sprinklers so water lands on the lawn and shrubs and not on paved areas.
- Repair sprinklers that spray a fine mist. Most misting issues result from a pressure problem, properly regulating pressure in an irrigation system will prevent misting.
- Check sprinkler systems and timing devices regularly to be sure they operate properly.
- Raise the lawn mower blade to at least three inches or to its highest level. A higher cut encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system, and holds soil moisture.
- Plant drought-resistant lawn seed. Reduce or eliminate lawn areas that are not used frequently.



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- Avoid over-fertilizing your lawn. Applying fertilizer increases the need for water. Apply fertilizers that contain slow-release, water-insoluble forms of nitrogen.
- Choose a water-efficient irrigation system such as drip irrigation for your trees, shrubs, and flowers.
- Turn irrigation down in fall and off in winter. Water manually in winter only if needed.
- 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.
- 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.

### POOL

- Install a new water-saving pool filter. A single back flushing with a traditional filter uses 180 to 250 gallons of water.
- Cover pools and spas to reduce evaporation of water.