

Water conservation outlined

Written by Linda Langelo, CSU Extension, horticulture program associate

According to Waskom and Neibauer at Colorado State University Extension, water supply planners estimate that a typical household needs approximately 150,000 gallons of water per year to satisfy the demand for water in the house and for the landscape. Since we live in a semi-arid climate that comes with multi-year droughts. Being conservative with this commodity means a future for our lives, our livestock and our crops.

If we designated water usage per person per day in Colorado, we have an average water useage of 200 gallons. In Arizona, most people use 160 gallons per day.

Forty percent of the 150,000 gallons of water goes toward keeping our turf and landscapes alive and healthy. This means that 60,000 gallons goes to the landscape. I love a beautiful landscape as much as anyone. But I would encourage people to look to change the type of turf they use for their lawns.

Kentucky Blue grass consumes the most water over other grasses. What if you could save yourself another 20,000 gallons on turf alone each year?

What if by planting with Plant Select® Plants, proven winners or natives we could save additional water? Who wouldn't want to reduce their water/electric bill?

I encourage people to come to the Phillips County Fairgrounds and take a look at the Plant Select® Garden. There are plants in this garden which, once planted, require no supplemental water. They are truly drought resistant. One of those plants is a ground cover called Silverheels Horehound. Another is a low evergreen shrub called Mock Bearberry Manzanita. There are many more. Become informed about some of the best choices. These plants have another added bonus. They do not require fertilization or pesticides and some do not need any pruning and save you money, except for the initial investment. What more could you ask for?

I encourage the use of these plants because I do not like spending the money to replace plants that do not do well here and need extra care to survive, only to die eventually. Consider your part in conserving water as part of the community, our livelihood and our future.

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Here are some things to consider when irrigating your landscape:

—Create an irrigation schedule relative to the types of plants in your landscape.

—Learn the water requirements of your landscape plants and water accordingly—if it is raining shut off the irrigation. Overwatering is as unhealthy as is wasteful.

—Manually operate your irrigation system.

—Do not irrigate daily, since weather conditions shift daily so do plants' water needs.

—Account for recent rainfall amounts before watering your landscape. In this 2012 drought year, be sure to water more deeply and less frequently. Do not make major changes in a drought year because it takes more water to establish new plants.

Other additional ways to save water:

—Check and repair leaks. Did you know that a faucet that leaks up to 60 drops/minute wastes 192 gallons/month?

—Replace broken or missing sprinkler heads.

—Make sure the heads spray properly.

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—Adjust heads so that the water does not spray the street or driveway.

—Renozzle spray heads with MP Rotators which are an alternative that save 30 percent water. These devices deliver multiple streams of water at a slow steady rate. They reduce runoff and allow water to soak in the ground.

—Place straight-sided containers such as tuna fish cans around the yard during irrigation. This is a way of measuring depth of water. You will know how long it takes to apply 1/4 -1/2 inch of water.

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