



# THE LANDSCAPE CENTER

## Water landscapes efficiently to conserve water

With dry conditions continuing throughout Colorado and much of the West, responsible use of water on landscapes is a must. Landscape experts with Colorado State University Cooperative Extension and the Green Industries of Colorado suggest following basic conservation principles that will maximize Colorado's limited water supply and encourage healthy, hardy and drought-resistant landscapes.

### General watering hints:

Lawns and planting beds should be watered according to their needs based on soil moisture levels. To check soil moisture, insert a 6-inch screwdriver into the soil. If it can be easily inserted, the soil doesn't need water.

- Water at night. Water lawns and other landscapes at night, between 9 p.m. and 9 a.m., but not during the heat of the day or when the wind is blowing. Set sprinklers to hit only landscapes, not sidewalks, driveways, windows, etc.
- Look for footprints. Water landscapes when footprints or mower tracks become easily visible on grass or when large areas of the lawn take on a bluish-gray color.
- Has it rained? Skip watering on days following one-half inch or more of rain. On cool, cloudy days, plants use less water and there is less evaporation, which increases the time between watering.
- Check sprinkler systems. Check to see how long each zone is scheduled to run and adjust the timer accordingly. A shade zone will require less water than a hot, sunny area and the cooler seasons require less water than hot summer months. Check sprinkler heads frequently to make sure they are functioning properly. Older timers may not be adjustable to a three-day cycle. Learn how to operate those systems manually to meet watering needs.
- Watering with a hose? Use household timers as a reminder to move or stop soaker hoses and sprinklers. Check the amount of water that sprinklers put out by placing a shallow container like a tuna fish can in the yard to measure water. This will help determine how long a landscape should be watered to apply an amount of water recommended by local utility services or homeowners associations.
- Newly planted landscapes take more water. Establishing new plants will initially require more water, but watering cycles should be adjusted to maintenance levels after landscapes are established. Mulching conserves moisture and can make a difference in water conservation on new and established landscapes. In general, trees are established two to three years after they are planted. Most flowers are established within two to three weeks, but herbaceous perennials may take up to eight weeks. New sod is established in three weeks and newly seeded grass is established in five weeks.

- CSU Cooperative Extension