

BE WATER WISE OUTDOORS

How can we avoid wasting water without greatly affecting our lifestyle? Follow these simple tips.

THE AVERAGE WATER USAGE IS NEARLY 1000 LITRES PER HOUSE PER DAY. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT APPROXIMATELY 40% OF THIS WATER IS USED OUTSIDE THE HOUSE TO WATER THE LAWNS AND GARDENS, WHICH IS MORE WATER THAN WE USE TO WASH OURSELVES AND OUR CLOTHES.

Garden Design

Some simple garden design ideas that can reduce your water consumption are:

- Minimise lawn areas as they will demand larger amounts of water.
- Choose plants for a purpose (such as privacy or shade) and group plants that demand large amounts of water together.
- Where possible use native plants and plants and shrubs indigenous to our local area that are suitable for our climate.
- Mulch reduces evaporation and runoff. Mulches come in many varied forms; choose mulch to suit your garden's needs.
- Construct paved areas so that they slope towards your lawn or garden areas rather than draining straight into the piped system.

GARDEN & LAWN IRRIGATION

In summer "less is best" - a good 15 minute soak once a week is more beneficial than surface sprinkling once a day - and you will save water.

Maintenance Of Your Lawn

- Careful maintenance of your lawn is also essential. Do not over-water, particularly when the water is applied in the evening as this can lead to the development of fungal problems. Be aware of particular signs of mis-watering, such as brown patches which indicate poor water distribution or areas that are not "wetable" because of the soil type. Moss growing may indicate over-watering, poor drainage or that little or no sunlight is reaching this area.
- Fertiliser use is closely linked to water use and also helps to maintain the organic matter level of the soil. Reducing the amount of water used also means you can reduce the amount of fertiliser. The recommendations that are supplied with every fertiliser should be regarded as maximum levels.
- Mowers should be set so that only one third of the leaf area is removed at any one time. This should leave a grass blade length of some 25 to 30mm. This amount of leaf shadows the soil surface and thus reduces evaporation loss..

Water Savings On The Lawn

- Choose a lawn type that is water efficient and best suited to your soil.
- Warm season grasses such as Couch have the lowest water demand. They also have a high drought tolerance. Other warm season grasses such as 'Buffalo' and 'Kikuyu' have an intermediate water use rate and a reasonably good drought resistance. Cool climate grasses such as 'Ryegrass', 'Kentucky Blue' and 'Bent Grass' have high water use rates and only a fair to poor drought resistance.
- Seek advice from a professional lawn care expert or your local nursery before deciding on a lawn type.
- Prepare soil before planting new lawn. Improved water efficiency can be achieved with a small amount of soil additive and organic matter added and rotary hoed through to a depth of 100 - 200 mm. This also encourages a deeper root system and a more efficient lawn.