

## Squeeze every drop

The City of Oklahoma City has partnered with Oklahoma State University's Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture and Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service to help promote outdoor water conservation.

**For more information about how you can save water outdoors check out these websites:**  
**[squeezeeverydrop.com](http://squeezeeverydrop.com)**  
**[thinkwater.okstate.edu](http://thinkwater.okstate.edu)**  
**[sip.mesonet.org](http://sip.mesonet.org)**



The City of  
**OKLAHOMA CITY**  
UTILITIES DEPARTMENT



Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service  
Division of Agricultural Sciences  
and Natural Resources  
Oklahoma State University

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President, Dean, and Director of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of \$1.75 per copy. 0713 JS.



## Seasonal Landscape Maintenance





Whether it is for irrigation, gardening or recreation, the change in seasons brings increased outdoor water usage. Up to 50 percent of water used for midday irrigation is lost through evaporation and runoff. Here are a few tips to help conserve water outdoors all year long.

## SPRING TIPS

- **Conduct an irrigation system checkup.** Check for leaks, broken or clogged sprinkler heads. Conduct an irrigation audit to determine uniformity and make sure you are not overwatering. Also, observe your irrigation system to ensure it is not watering streets or sidewalks.
- **Install a rain sensor** that turns off your system during rainy weather.
- **Consider upgrading to a smart controller** that automatically adjusts your irrigation schedule based on soil moisture and weather.
- **Water at the right time and only when needed.** The best times to water are in the early morning and in the evening when winds are calm and the temperature is cool. This reduces water loss from evaporation. Also, allowing the soil to dry between watering allows plants to develop stronger, deeper roots. However, some landscape plants can get diseases from late-night watering.
- **Mulch!** Mulch maintains soil moisture, prevents weeds, reduces soil erosion and can help improve soil quality as it decomposes. Maintain a 2-inch to 3-inch layer around trees, shrubs and bedding plants. Avoid over-layering directly against trees to discourage trunk rot.
- **Consider redesigning your landscape** and garden to make it more drought tolerant. This is an attractive option requiring less water.
- **When out of town,** make sure someone is keeping an eye on your irrigation system.

## PREPARE FOR SUMMER

- **Continue regular irrigation maintenance,** checking for leaks and overwatering.
- **Adjust your irrigation timer** to follow watering restrictions. Watering too frequently produces shallow roots, while watering less frequently produces stronger roots.
- **Consider installing drip or micro irrigation** in your flower beds, vegetable gardens and containers to reduce water loss due to evaporation.
- **Start a compost bin.** Use leaves, vegetable scraps and twigs in alternating green and brown layers. Bins can be made out of old trash cans, chicken wire or wood pallets, or purchased at retail stores. Compost increases your soil's water- and nutrient-holding capacity.
- **Check for watering restrictions** in your area.
- **Let your grass go dormant.** If it turns brown, don't worry. That's just how it survives hot, dry summers.
- **Raise the blade on your mower** to at least 1 inch high for bermudagrass and 3 inches for fescue. This will reduce the need for water.
- **Wash your car on the grass or gravel** so it will soak into the ground rather than running down the storm drain. Instead of leaving the water running, use a bucket and a nozzle with an automatic shutoff to reduce wasted water. Typical garden hoses use 5 to 10 gallons per minute!
- **Be weather aware.** If you don't have a rain sensor or smart controller, check weather forecasts and shut off your irrigation system when rain is in the forecast.

## GET READY FOR FALL

- **In the fall, plants require less water.** Adjust your system accordingly.
- **Compost your leaves instead of bagging them** to save landfill space and recycle beneficial nutrients.
- **To prepare for winter** and freezing conditions, turn off water, drain valves and blow out excess water in the lines with compressed air.
- **Disconnect, drain, coil and store garden hoses to reduce wear.**
- **Check your water usage history** for unusual changes that may signal leaks or other wasteful problems.

## BUCKLE DOWN FOR WINTER

- **Tree roots continue to grow during the winter.** If extended dry spells are experienced, consider hand watering your trees once a month.
- **Check your lawn.** Warm-season grasses go dormant during winter months, but they still require adequate moisture. Irrigate your lawn in the morning during warmer winter days to avoid winter kill if dry conditions persist.