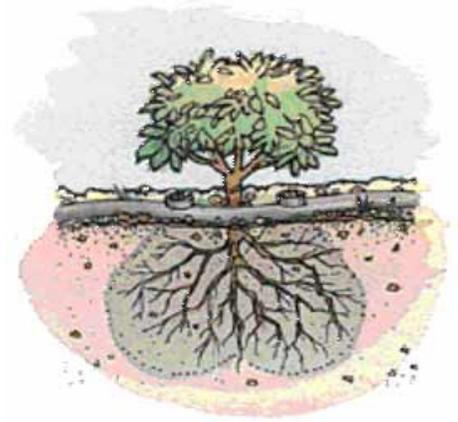


WATER SMART IRRIGATION.....

How to Conserve Water in Your Garden



Water is in short supply in California and throughout the nation.

Voluntary and, in some cases, mandatory water restrictions have been implemented in many communities. Plants are an important part of our environment, not only for their impact on the quality of life but also because they greatly affect our environment, our climate and our water supplies. Here are some helpful facts, tips and tricks to save water and to adapt our landscapes to these challenges.

1. Use drip irrigation when watering the trees, shrubs and groundcovers in your garden. Only use sprinklers for turf.
2. Only water in the early morning hours when the heat will not cause so much evaporation.
3. Don't turn the sprinkler on if you aren't going to be home and monitor your sprinklers to be sure the water isn't running off into the street.
4. Always use a nozzle with a shut-off valve on your garden hose. This allows you to control the water without having to go to the hose bib.
5. If your downspouts are connected to the storm drains, cut them and direct the water into either rain barrels or into a rain garden so the water goes into the aquifer instead of the ocean.

TREES:

Trees keep the landscape and its inhabitants cooler, provide habitat for birds and animals and add value to property. It is important give them a deep watering monthly. Add a 3" to 4" layer of mulch around the tree, keeping it at least 3" away from the crown. If pruning is required, do so before April or wait until next spring as pruning stimulates growth which requires more water.

SHRUBS AND GROUNDCOVERS:

Add and 3" to 4" layer of mulch to all planting beds and under every shrub. *A 3" layer of mulch reduces water loss by 20% and lowers the temperature of the top 4" of soil by 10 degrees.* Don't use gravel or rock as they absorb heat and cause moisture to evaporate.

Replace sprinklers, sprayers or bubblers with *drip irrigation which is 20% more water efficient.*

Replace high water use plants with those that require less water.

TURF:

A lawn is a very thirsty luxury. In Sonoma and Marin Counties, where there is no summer rain, the average *1,000 square foot lawn uses 22,400 gallons of water per season!* In addition, the herbicides and pesticides

used to keep lawns pest-free are causing terrible problems in our creeks, rivers and oceans and affecting the fish and other waterlife. Consider reducing the size of your lawn or replacing it all together with drought tolerant groundcovers or lawn alternative grasses. Some water agencies are offering rebates for turf removal and installation of low water use irrigation products

If you do have a lawn, follow these tips to conserve water:

- Mow grass higher during summer months, 3" to 3.5" to hold more moisture, to cool the underlying soil and to promote deeper root growth. Remove only 25% per mowing.
- Thatch and aerate the lawn and fill the holes with compost; this also helps promote deep root growth and water penetration.
- Do not use high nitrogen fertilizers during the summer as this causes rapid growth which requires more water.
- Program your irrigation controller for multiple start times, 30 minutes apart and run it for only 5 minutes or less each time. This reduces run off and, therefore, water waste.
- Water early; all cycles should finish before 9:00 am.
- Briefly mist your lawn at the end of the day to create humidity.
- Adjust your watering run times at least once a month. Don't turn it on and forget it. And DON'T forget to turn it off when the winter rains start.
- Consider replacing your old irrigation controller with a new "smart" controller that monitors weather conditions and automatically adjusts watering on a daily basis.
- Replace existing sprinklers with new, water saving models available at professional irrigation stores. This will take some research, but is well worth it in water and money savings.
- Separate irrigation stations into hydra zones; plants with similar water requirements are watered on their designated station.
- Check your system periodically. Fix leaks, replace broken sprinklers, adjust spray patterns, etc.
- Keep in mind that a lawn can go very dry, it can even look dead, but it will come back with winter rains.