



Timely Tips to Nip Outdoor Water Waste

Saving water and money – it all adds up.

Jack Tichenor, Extension Agent for Outdoor Water Conservation

Outdoor water use accounts for up to half the water consumed in an average home. There are many ways to reduce your outdoor water use by taking a few simple steps. It’s usually a combination of these small water saving steps that add up to make a difference. And reducing your water bill is like extra tax-free income. Getting interested? Below are some tips that can be used by nearly everyone with any outdoor space at their home. Some of the tips are just reminders but you may be surprised at others.

1. Skip a week in winter lawn watering. Lawns need less water in cool weather. Set your irrigation timer to the off position. Watch for signs of dryness in your lawn before switching the irrigation timer from off to automatic. Tell-tale indicators are footprints that remain in the grass, a blue-grey color, folded grass leaf blades, and soil that is dry to the touch; moist soil will stick to the fingers.
2. Use tuna or pet food cans to adjust each sprinkler zone to run long enough to apply ¾ inch of water during each watering cycle. Any more than this seeps down below where the roots are and is lost.
3. Adjust or repair sprinklers to stop overspray onto streets, drives, walks, buildings, etc.
4. Fertilize sparingly only during the active growing season. Use fertilizer with a slow release formula.
5. Choose a water efficient lawn and landscape. Carefully selecting and grouping Florida friendly plants could reduce the need for irrigation.
6. Mow St. Augustine and Bahia 3 inches high and keep the mower sharp for a clean cut. Leave clippings, which reduces the need for fertilizer, but spread or remove thick patches of clippings.
7. Dig up water-loving weeds that rob water and nutrients from the lawn.
8. Mulch shrub and flower beds about 3 inches thick to reduce water loss and weeds. Pull mulch back from plant stems and edge of house. Do not mulch citrus trees.
9. Use a rain barrel to collect rainwater. This is a good source of water for plants and helps reduce water runoff. Rain barrels can be bought from Manatee County Utility Operations, 792-8811 ext. 5327 or from some local stores.
10. Look for leaks. Check faucets, hoses and connections and repair or turn off when not in use. Soft, wet spots in the lawn could indicate a leak in the irrigation system or in the main water supply. With all water-using

Lawn Watering Restrictions thru Feb. 27, 2009	
If your address (house number) ends in:	Water once on:
0,1	Monday
2,3	Tuesday
4,5	Wednesday
6,7	Thursday
8,9*	Friday
* and areas with no discernable address	
No watering before 8 am or after 6 pm.	
Micro-irrigation of plants and shrubs is allowed.	
Local governments/agencies may impose more strict rules.	
Ref: www.WaterMatters.Org	

appliances turned off, watch the water meter's little red triangle closely – if it turns water is flowing and there may be a leak.

11. Use an automatic shutoff nozzle on the hose. An open faucet or hose can pour out 530 gallons an hour. Turn the faucet off when finished to prevent leaks or hose bursts.
12. Use a broom or leaf blower instead of a hose to clean drives, walks, and patios.
13. Avoid using recreational toys that require a constant stream of water.
14. Check the swimming pool's fill valve to see if it is on frequently. There may be a leak in the pool.
15. Cover the pool or spa when not in use to prevent evaporation loss.
16. Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water or wash your car on the grass.

This fact sheet was written January 27, 2009 by Jack Tichenor, Extension Agent for Outdoor Water Conservation.

For more information or for an events calendar call the Manatee County Extension Service Office, 1303 17th Street W, Palmetto, FL 34221, (941) 722-4524 or go to the website at <http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu>. Look for *water conservation program* on the left side of page. Some information for this article was from the Southwest Florida Water Management District's water conservation section.



Sprinkler Overspray / Runoff