



Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Division of Soil and Water Resources

Fact Sheet

Fact Sheet 92-2

Water Efficiency in Your Own Back Yard

You and your family should begin to practice water efficiency right in your own back yard. While you may have learned to make the most efficient use of water inside your home – in the kitchen, bath and laundry – you should also know how to save water when caring for your commitment to back yard water conservation

Watering Lawns and Gardens

During the hot, dry summer months, frequent watering of lawns and gardens can *more than double* a normal Ohio household's water usage. You'll conserve precious water resources by watering lawns and garden plants early in the day, before 10 a.m., to reduce evaporation and sun scalding. Water slowly, deeply – and less frequently. Your lawn shouldn't need more than one inch of water per week, either through natural rainfall, watering or a combination of both. You can measure that easily by setting an empty tuna can on a shaded, open area of lawn.

Most important of all, don't lock yourself into a fixed watering schedule. Let conditions and common sense be your guide – and water only when necessary. For example, you shouldn't need to water on a cloudy day or during a cool spell.

During the hottest weeks of the summer, brown grass doesn't necessarily mean dead grass. Turf grasses protect themselves during hot, dry spells by becoming brown and dormant. Their root systems will usually remain alive and healthy. Mow less frequently during hot weather and set your mower to keep the grass taller (about three inches). This will allow the grass to shade its own roots and reduce the watering required.

“The Foot-Print Test”

Your feet may be your best guide to an efficient lawn-watering schedule. Use the Foot-Print Test by walking across your lawn. If the grass springs back after it's been walked on, your lawn doesn't need watering.

Lawn Sprinklers and Hoses

A single lawn sprinkler can use as much as 600 gallons of water per hour. Position your sprinkler so that every last drop of water reaches the lawn *and only the lawn* – not sidewalks, driveways or streets. You'll also make better use of your sprinkler if you avoid the fine mist setting, which loses too much water to evaporation.

A garden hose can discharge as much as six gallons of water per minute or up to 360 gallons per hour. Equip the hose with a quick-shutoff nozzle and, again, avoid the mist setting.

Don't waste water by using it on anything that's not green and growing. That means using a broom (instead of your hose and a lot of water) to clean sidewalks and driveways. Wash your car only when necessary and use the hose only for rinsing. If the youngsters want to keep cool with the sprinkler or garden hose, make sure their play area moves frequently around the lawn. That way the water does double-duty by wetting down as much grass as possible.

Gardens, Shrubs and Trees

Gardens, ornamental plants, shrubs and young trees (those with trunks less than 3" diameter) should be your first priority for watering during hot weather. They're not as well equipped as turf grasses to survive a drought. A typical residential landscape can lose as much as 80% of its irrigation water through evaporation. You can save a great deal of that water (as well as a lot of your own time) by using mulch in your garden, in raised beds and around shrubs and young trees. The mulch holds in water, shades sensitive roots and keeps down weeds as well. You might also want to consider installation of a water-saving drip irrigation system for your garden plants and shrubs.

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An efficient way to water young trees is to drill a 1/16" hole in the bottom of a five-gallon bucket. Fill the bucket with water and place it beside the tree's trunk base. A very slow, but steady trickle of water will reach the tree's roots rather than surrounding grass that competes with the tree for moisture.

Swimming Pools

Because they hold a great deal of water, swimming pools also offer a big potential for wasting water. Reduce water losses by keeping the level lower than usual to minimize splashing. The use of a pool cover will not only slow water evaporation, but also keep the pool cleaner and reduce maintenance.

Inside the House

Water conservation *inside* your house is a year-round activity. The Division Fact Sheet, "**Water Efficiency at Home**" offers detailed information and tips to help you conserve water around the house.

Private Wells

If you're among the many Ohioans who depend upon private wells for their household water needs, consult the Division Fact Sheet, "**Private Wells – Solutions to Common Problems**".

For additional information on water efficiency and the conservation of Ohio's water resources, contact:

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