

Tips for smart landscape watering

Water may be a life and death situation for your landscape plants. It may also harm your drinking water. Here are some tips to save you money and protect the water you drink.

Overwatering can kill your plants. Overwatering clogs soil pores, which suffocates the roots. Let your plants dry out between waterings to let their roots breathe.

Overwatering can pollute the water. About 70 percent of the drinking water in the Redmond-Bear Creek Valley comes from groundwater. Excess irrigation can leach fertilizers and pesticides into the groundwater, local streams and lakes.

Tips for Smart Watering

Water your trees and shrubs slowly and deeply. This helps your plants grow deep, healthy roots. All new plantings, even drought-tolerant plants, need regular water until roots are established, usually at least two growing seasons.

Moisten the entire root zone, then let the soil dry out before you water again. The root zone extends as wide as the plant or beyond. Water below the plant's outer branches, not at the trunk.

Check your watering. Several hours after watering, push a long screwdriver or metal rod into the ground. It will pass easily through moist soil and stop or slow down when it reaches dry soil.

Mulch to conserve moisture. Use a few inches of compost, wood chips, grass clippings or other organic materials in landscape beds. A one-inch layer can reduce soil surface temperatures by 15 degrees on a hot day.

Group plants with the same water needs together so plants get the right amount of water.

Use a timer. A simple kitchen timer will help you remember to turn off the water, saving money and your plants.

Water when it's cool. Watering mid-day, especially when it's sunny, will waste half the water to evaporation. Water plants in the morning or early evening.

Check your irrigation system. Many people with irrigation systems actually use *more* water because they set them once and forget them. If possible, use a timer as part of your irrigation system.

For more watering tips, visit www.savingwater.org/. For gardening questions, contact the Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline at 206-633-0224 or info@lawnandgardenhotline.org.

This article was brought to you courtesy of King County and the Redmond-Bear Creek Groundwater Protection Committee.