



Begin with a *waterSmart* Design

Landscape and irrigation designs should complement one another. A *waterSmart* landscape is more than just water-efficient. It's a landscape that has been carefully designed, properly installed and managed to reduce pollution, improve conservation and strive for year-round beauty. A *waterSmart* landscape is designed to be functional and water-efficient. Existing vegetation that is well-established and desirable should be preserved and incorporated into the design since it generally does not require supplemental irrigation. The principles of a *waterSmart* landscape are outlined in UGA Cooperative Extension Circular 930 *Developing a waterSmart Landscape* <http://tinyurl.com/UGAwatersmart>. Incorporated suggestions include: design your landscape to minimize high water-use areas, properly prepare soil, install appropriate plants in the right locations with appropriate sunlight and soils, minimize the footprint of irrigated areas, maximize water use efficiency in irrigated areas, use mulch and grasscycling when possible, and maintain a conservation ethic to reduce water, fertilizer and pesticide use.

For additional information on saving water in the landscape, see www.conservewatergeorgia.net or call your local county Cooperative Extension office at 1-800-ASK-UGA1.

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Do your part...and be *waterSmart*.
And remember...the water we save today is an investment in our future!

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Know How and When to *waterSmart*:



**A guide to outdoor watering
rules and landscape water
conservation in Georgia**



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
College of Family and Consumer Sciences

Georgia Water Stewardship Act

The Water Stewardship Act is intended to demonstrate Georgia's commitment to the conservation of critical freshwater supplies. This Act was passed to help ensure that Georgia's water supply system can sustainably meet the needs of economic development in the state, while also maintaining adequate flows that satisfy instream and downstream needs in both Georgia and its neighboring states. The Water Stewardship Act encourages water conservation both indoors and outdoors. The Act promotes indoor water conservation by encouraging the installation of efficient fixtures and equipment. Outdoors, the Act encourages landscape best management practices and efficient irrigation. An electronic copy of Georgia Senate Bill 370 (as passed) can be found online at: www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2009_10/sum/sb370.htm. This publication is intended to help homeowners ensure that irrigated landscapes follow the Georgia Water Stewardship Act and make the best use of water in the landscape.

Water Sources:

There are no schedule or quantity limits on water use from the following outdoor water sources:

- Capture and reuse of cooling system condensate or stormwater;
- Reuse of gray water;
- Use of reclaimed wastewater; or
- Use of water withdrawn from private water wells or surface water on the owners' property.



Plants do not require tap water that is treated to meet drinking water standards. Capturing and using rainwater, condensate, stormwater and gray water are conservation practices that not only save water, but can also reduce runoff and pollution of downstream waterways. Before implementing any of these practices, be sure to meet all state and local ordinances.

When available, reclaimed wastewater is often provided at a reduced rate that could significantly lower consumer water bills. Using these alternative water sources creates a more sustainable and waterSmart landscape. If you are using a private well or surface water, your water use is not restricted, but it is still important to conserve water wherever possible.

Allowable/Permissible Irrigation:

The Water Stewardship Act does not limit the following types of irrigation:

- Drip irrigation or irrigation using soaker hoses;
- Hand watering with a handheld container or a hose with automatic cutoff;
- Irrigation of personal food gardens;
- Irrigation of horticultural crops intended for sale, resale or installation;
- Irrigation of athletic fields, golf courses or public turfgrass recreational areas;
- Irrigation of new and replanted plants, seed or turfgrass in landscapes, golf courses or sports turf fields during installation and for a period of 30 days immediately following the date of installation; or
- Installation, maintenance or calibration of irrigation systems.

While these situations and uses are exempt, it is still important to promote conservation, maximize irrigation efficiency and, where possible, conform to nighttime and evening water use provisions.

Limited Irrigation:

The Water Stewardship Act only permits outdoor sprinkler irrigation between 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. Irrigating early in the morning reduces water loss due to evaporation and prevents plants and turfgrass from remaining wet overnight, which helps reduce disease and pest problems.

For ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers, using low-volume irrigation such as drips or micro-sprinklers can reduce evaporation by 30% to 50% over sprinkler irrigation. If you are using sprinkler irrigation, be sure that the system is operated and maintained properly to avoid leaks, runoff, applications on impervious surfaces and significant overlap or over-irrigation. If your system is automated, ensure that the controls are set properly and that the system is equipped with a rain shutoff sensor or soil moisture sensors, which prevent system operation during rainfall events or when soil moisture deems irrigation unnecessary. UGA Cooperative Extension publications *Make Every Drop Count! Efficient Landscape Irrigation Systems* (Circular 895-5) and *Using Water Wisely with Automated Irrigation Systems* (Circular 870) can help you better manage your existing irrigation systems. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/UGAwatersmart> to find these and other irrigation publications.

Upon application to and approval by the director of the Environmental Protection Division, any political subdivision of this state or local government authority may, for good cause shown, impose more stringent restrictions on outdoor water use.



Schedule Your Irrigation to Make Every Drop Count!

Applying the proper amount of water and scheduling it at the proper time is another key *waterSmart* feature. Watering in the early morning can reduce evaporation losses and disease pressure because the foliage will not be wet for an extended period. Outdoor water use can easily be reduced by irrigating only when plants need water. A routine, visual inspection of the landscape can help indicate when irrigation is necessary.



Over-irrigation can produce unhealthy plants. Most landscape plants do not need irrigation every day. Over-watering can create problems such as shallow root systems, causing plants to become stressed in adverse environmental conditions. Plants stressed by excessive watering are more susceptible to diseases, insects and weeds.

Rainfall should be the main water source for your landscape whenever possible. The frequency of rainfall and the resulting amount of irrigation needed changes continuously. Plants' water needs are generally greatest in the spring and decline in the fall and winter.

Soil moisture sensors can be installed on some automated irrigation systems. Soil moisture sensors measure the amount of water in a soil and are a management tool that can help to determine when irrigation is necessary.

Irrigate deeply and infrequently, depending on the depth of the root system. Deep, infrequent irrigation cycles can contribute to the development of healthy root systems that can withstand adverse environmental conditions. Landscape plants that are watered every day will typically develop a shallow root system and the plant can become more quickly stressed in hot, dry conditions.

Maintain your system. Leaks and improperly functioning systems can waste a significant amount of water. Fix leaks promptly. Winterize, inspect or have your system evaluated (audited) by an irrigation professional annually.

Conform to the watering schedule imposed by state and local governments. It is important to be aware of current outdoor water restrictions in your community. Unless plants need watering, do not feel compelled to irrigate every day that is allowed.