Saving Water
OUTDOORS

Saving Water Outdoors

Typically, outdoor water use accounts for up to 50 percent of water consumed by residential households. You can reduce your outdoor water consumption by taking a few simple steps.

Let's start with these tips when
Checking for Leaks

Water Faucets, Hoses and Connectors
- Check all faucets, hoses and connectors for leaks periodically and make sure they are working properly.
- Close faucets when not in use.
- Change the washer after turning off the shutoff valve if you find a leaky faucet.

Automatic Lawn and Sprinkling Systems
- Look for soft, wet spots on your lawn around the inground sprinkler. This could be an indication of a leak that is being absorbed into the ground.
- Contact a licensed irrigation contractor certified in efficient irrigation practices if repairs are needed.

Swimming Pool

- Check the pool system's shutoff valve, which works automatically, to see if it is malfunctioning and causing a continuous cycle of water to be pumped in and then drained out. If the water level stays higher than normal and it overflows when people are using it, call your plumber.

- Check for pool leaks by placing an empty bucket filled with enough water so that the level of water is equal to the level in the pool. Without using the pool, check the water levels in a few days. If the pool's water level is lower than the bucket's water level, your pool may have a leak. Remember, most uncovered pools in Florida will lose about ⅛" to ¼" of water a day to evaporation depending on what type of water features, such as waterfalls or fountains, are present.

Service Connecting Line

- Check for soft, wet spots on your lawn or listen for the sound of running water outside your house, which may be an indication of a leak in the service line to your house.

- Close the main shutoff valve and if the sound of running water continues or you detect wet spots, contact your plumber or water utility.

Learn about different
Irrigation Methods

Micro-irrigation
For more efficient water application, consider using micro-irrigation, which targets the root zone of the plants and irrigates 50 percent or less area. In addition, micro-irrigation minimizes water lost to evaporation and slows weed growth.

Hoses and Sprinklers
- Place the sprinkler in the area that is driest.
- Allow the sprinkler to run the proper length of time to apply one-half to three-quarters of an inch of water.
- After one area has received enough water, move the sprinkler so that its water spray will overlap the area previously watered.
- Adjust the hose or sprinkler until it waters just the grass or shrubs, not paved areas.

Inground Irrigation
Inground irrigation systems can be automatic or manual, or a combination. The automatic system can provide an efficient method of irrigating lawns because controllers turn the system off after a predetermined amount of time, so a measured amount of water is applied. Make sure to learn how to operate your system and follow these tips:
- Check timing devices regularly to make sure they are operating properly.
- Check for broken or misdirected sprinklers monthly.
- Replace broken heads with the same type and make sure sprays and rotors are not used in the same zone.

Follow these tips when
Irrigating

- Make sure your rain sensor or soil moisture sensor is working if you have an automatic irrigation system. These devices override the system when enough rain has fallen or the soil is moist enough to skip an irrigation cycle.
- Irrigate only when your lawn and landscape need water and only on your watering day.
- Water your lawn when it shows signs of stress, including grass blades that are blue-gray color and folded in half lengthwise.
- Water your lawn during the cool, early morning hours to avoid water loss by evaporation and discourage disease.
- Avoid watering on windy days.
- Train your landscape to use less water by skipping a week of watering in the winter.
- Apply an average of one-half to three-quarters of an inch of water per application for most Florida soils. To determine how long to run your sprinkler, perform a catch-can test.

How to Perform a Catch-Can Test

- Place 5-6 cat food or tuna cans around one irrigation zone.
- Turn on the irrigation zone for 15 minutes.
- Use a ruler to measure how much water collected in each can.
- Add all of the measurements up and divide by the number of cans.
- This will give you the average amount of water collected in the zone.
- You can now use this amount of water to adjust your irrigation system to make sure you're irrigating for the recommended amount of time.

Try these tips while

Mowing

- Cut your grass at the highest recommended height for your turf species to encourage grass roots to grow deeper and grass blades to hold moisture.
- Keep your mower blades sharp since dull blades tear grass, opening it to disease and causing it to appear tan and ragged.
- Leave short grass clippings where they fall to reduce the lawn's need for water and fertilizer.
- Remove thick patches of clippings so that the clippings will not kill the grass underneath.

Here are more

Water-Saving Tips

- Use a rain barrel to collect rainwater. Rainwater is free and is better for your plants because it doesn't contain hard minerals.
- Do not leave sprinklers unattended. Use a kitchen timer to remind yourself to turn sprinklers off.
- Do not hose down your driveway or sidewalk. Use a broom to clean leaves and other debris from these areas.

- Use a shutoff nozzle on your hose that can be adjusted down to a fine spray so that water flows only as needed. When finished, turn it off at the spigot instead of at the nozzle to avoid leaks.
- Cover your spa or pool to reduce evaporation.
- Consider a new water-saving pool filter if you have a swimming pool.
- Avoid purchasing recreational water toys that require a constant stream of water.
- Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water. If you wash your own car, park on the grass, use a bucket of soapy water and use a hose with a shutoff nozzle.
- Dig out water-loving weeds and cultivate soil often.
- Avoid the installation of ornamental water features, such as fountains, unless the water is recycled.
- Water slowly to reduce runoff and to allow deep penetration.
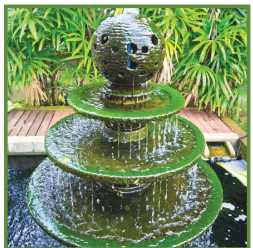
Southwest Florida Water Management District Offices

Brooksville Headquarters
2379 Broad Street
Brooksville, FL 34604-6899
(352) 796-7211 • 1-800-423-1476 (FL only)

Bartow Service Office
170 Century Boulevard
Bartow, FL 33830-7700
(863) 534-1448 • 1-800-492-7862 (FL only)

Sarasota Service Office
78 Sarasota Center Boulevard
Sarasota, FL 34240-9770
(941) 377-3722 • 1-800-320-3503 (FL only)

Tampa Service Office
7601 Highway 301 North
Tampa, FL 33637-6759
(813) 985-7481 • 1-800-836-0797 (FL only)

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WATERMATTERS.ORG • 1-800-423-1476

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