WISE WATER USE OUTDOORS

It is estimated that as much as half of the water applied to the landscape is wasted due to significant inefficiencies in watering practices and over-watering. Proper installation of **irrigation systems** obviously reduces the amount of waste that occurs but it is perhaps more important that an irrigation system is well maintained and it's watering schedule tightly managed. In recent years, irrigation system audits that measure and evaluate irrigation systems have become increasingly popular among water providers, professional irrigators and users to address wasteful watering.

Outside the Home:

Water When Needed – Don't Water in the Rain!!

Consider installing a rainfall or soil moisture sensor for your automatic sprinkler system. Rainfall sensors stop watering in the rain and moisture sensors monitor the soil to determine when and how much water is needed. Did you know that there are an estimated 13.5 million irrigation systems currently installed in residential lawns across the U.S.? Of these 13.5 million units, <10% use weather- based controllers to schedule irrigation. The majority use standard clock timer controllers.

- **Keep it cool. Water your lawn or garden during the cool morning hours, as opposed to midday, to reduce evaporation.**
- **Look for sprinklers that produce droplets, not mist, or use soaker hoses or trickle irrigation for trees and shrubs.**
- **Sidewalks don't need water. Set sprinklers to water lawns and gardens only.**
- **Try not to overwater your landscaping. Learn plant's water needs and water different types appropriately.**
- **Don't over-fertilize. You will increase the lawn's need for water.**
- **Let it grow. Raise your lawn mower blade to at least 3 inches. Taller grass promotes deeper roots, shades the root system, and holds soil moisture better than a closely cropped lawn.**

Garden With Care:

- Plant climate-appropriate species. Try plants that are native to where you live, which don't require as much water, and group plants together by water requirements. Low-water grasses and shrubs will reduce your watering requirements by 20-50%. See local nurseries for ideas.
- Make the beds. Use mulch around trees and plants to help reduce evaporation and control water-stealing weeds. Organic mulches include grass, wood, humus, and bark. Inorganic mulches are rock, gravel, boulders and stones.
- Importance of Soil Amendment: amending your soil with compost retains moisture in the soil, allowing water to go to plants for longer periods of time. Compost provides small amounts of important plant nutrients, including nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, which improves root growth. It also opens clay soils for better drainage and closes sandy soils to prevent water from leaching away too quickly.
- Plug away. Requiring soil amendment is one of the many conservation efforts that will reduce outdoor water use. More than half of outdoor water use is for irrigation. Amending soils, planting low-water plants and trees, and educating customers that their landscapes can still be healthy with less water are all important ways to cut back on water use.
- Remove weeds – they steal water.

Saving water is saving money! If we all conserve, it can save us again because it reduces the demand on the water delivery system. Do your part – use conservation landscaping. Repair leaks immediately!