



Earth Gauge™ - Smart Irrigation Month

Environmental Information for Broadcast Meteorologists

July is Smart Irrigation Month! Currently, much of the United States is experiencing drought conditions, which occur when there is an extended, abnormally dry period which results in water shortages that alter the balance of the hydrologic (water) cycle. The most important thing you can do during drought is conserve water, and a great place to start is in your own yard!

DID YOU KNOW?

- Thirty-two (32) percent of the water that is used outdoors is used for the lawn, which adds up to nearly eight billion gallons of water used on lawns each day. That's enough water to fill more than 26,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools!
- About 50 percent of the water used for your lawn and garden is wasted. Over the course of a year, that's equivalent to letting your hose run for three days straight.
- A garden hose left unattended can dispense as much as 600 gallons of water in only a couple of hours.
- Micro-irrigation systems (drip hoses, micro-sprinklers, or bubbler hoses) use 20 to 50 percent less water than conventional sprinklers. They also help minimize water evaporation and runoff.



BECOME A SMART IRRIGATOR

- **Water your lawn in the early morning!** The best time to water your lawn is in the early morning hours. At this time of day, humidity is higher and wind speed is lower, so the water given to your lawn will not readily evaporate.
- **Use mulch around your plants.** Mulch helps the soil retain moisture as well as suppresses the growth of weeds. Keeping weeds away from your plants is a good way to conserve water because weeds compete with your plants for water.
- **Plant native plants** or plants which are more tolerant of drought conditions! These plants require less water, less frequently. They are also more likely to survive a dry period because they are well-adapted to your climate.
- **Avoid using too much fertilizer.** Fertilizers can increase your lawn's need for water! When you do fertilize, follow directions carefully and only apply as much as you need.
- **Never leave a hose or sprinkler unattended** – set a timer to remind you to shut the water off.
- **Steer clear of sprinklers that use a fine mist.** Most of the water used in a fine mist sprinkler will evaporate before it even reaches the ground.

LEARN MORE

- US EPA WaterSense Program. "Water Efficiently for Smart Irrigation Month!"
<http://www.epa.gov/watersense/news/sim.htm>
- American Red Cross. "Drought: Fact Sheet on Water Conservation."
http://www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0_95_,00.html
- US Drought Monitor. <http://drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>



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