

Mulch keeps away weeds and aids moisture retention

2 Build watering basins with mulch, not soil around the root areas of plants to aid in deep watering of new or established landscape shrubs. Fill slowly to allow soil to accept water without runoff. It may be necessary to repeat with large plants. Note that basins are not necessary with low volume irrigation systems.

3 Mulch under plants to speed water penetration to roots, reducing evaporation and soil erosion. Remember to not pile mulch over the rootball or on the trunk.

Lawn

1 Water your lawn on an "as-needed basis" rather than setting your sprinkler system to come on automatically. Signs that you need to irrigate include leaf blades that have folded in half or foot or tire tracks that remain visible long after being made. The amount of water needed will depend on the number of factors such as where you are in the state, time of year, grass species used, or amount of shade in your yard. See the table inside for a general guideline to lawn irrigation frequency.

2 Each time you irrigate, apply between 1/2 - 3/4 inch of water. More water will generally leach past the root system and not be taken up by the plant. More frequent watering will result in a lawn that is less able to withstand insects or other problems.

3 Water occasionally but deeply to make maximum use of water. Making sure water penetrates deep into the ground will encourage healthier roots, allowing turf to last longer between waterings. Surface watering will encourage roots to stay shallow; whereas deep watering will guide roots farther into the soil, where they can seek out moisture.

4 Too much nitrogen will increase turfgrass water consumption. Fertilize with smaller amounts of nitrogen in the summer or apply iron to maintain green color but not increase turfgrass growth. Potassium may be able to provide some enhanced drought tolerance.

5 Grass that is left unmowed will release water vapor more readily than grass that has been properly cut. Mow frequently enough so that no more than one-third of the leaf blade is removed at any mowing, and increase the cutting height to expand the root system. Leave clippings on the lawn to help retain moisture.

Don't forget the mulch

Mulches discourage weeds, reduce runoff and help the soil retain moisture.

ORGANIC MULCHES Pine needles, compost, shredded bark, grass clippings, melaleuca, pine straw and wood chips.

INORGANIC MULCHES Rock, gravel and synthetic material.

1 Many people make the mistake of spreading too thin or too thick a layer of mulch, about 3-4 inches is needed to be effective. More than 4", can be detrimental. Thick mulch can prevent water from reaching the roots, especially on new plantings.

2 Be sure to keep mulch away from the plants' trunks, because too much moisture there can lead to rotting.

3 Bark mulch isn't your only option. Low-growing, spreading ground covers offer a colorful, living alternative. Like traditional mulches, ground covers discourage weeds and help the soil retain moisture.

FAQ's

Does landscaping really add to the value of a home?

Definitely. Ask any real estate expert and they'll tell you that a well-maintained yard can add as much as 15 percent to a home's value.

What's an easy way to conserve water?

Follow local irrigation regulations, irrigate in the early morning or evening hours — when evaporation is lowest.

Why is mulching important?

Properly applied mulch will discourage weeds, reduce runoff and help the soil retain moisture.

How much water does my lawn need?

For best lawn performance, most grasses benefit from watering every 3-4 days during the summer months. In cooler times of the year, grass may be irrigated less frequently. For more specific information on turfgrass irrigation needs, please go the University of Florida IFAS turfgrass website at <http://turf.ufl.edu>.

Can I plant during the summer?

Absolutely! It's a great time to plant. Roots of most plants grow quicker during the summer. Please go to the University of Florida woody plant website <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/planting> for more information on planting.

Where can I get more information on water-wise landscaping?

Florida Certified Horticulture Professionals at your local garden center are knowledgeable, happy to answer questions and help you select the right plants for your landscape. The Extension Office in your county can provide you with research based information from the University of Florida. Trained volunteer Master Gardeners are also available to answer questions and hold workshops in your community.

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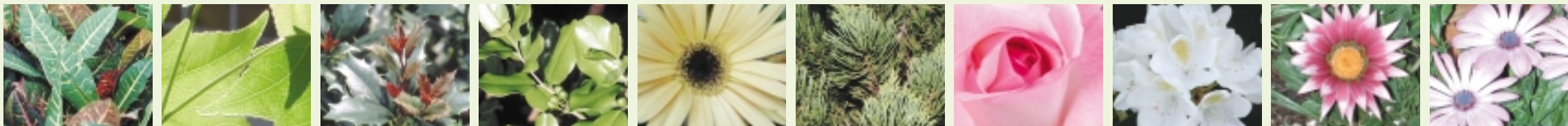
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Think you can't buy plants during a dry spell?

You can.

How to be wise with water in your landscape



How you can have your plants — and water them, too



When your grass shows signs that it needs water, irrigate to apply approximately 1/2-3/4" of water. This will depend on location in state, season, grass species, soil type, shade in yard, etc. In general, the following irrigation intervals will provide ample water for lawns:

	North FL	Central FL	South FL
Winter	8-28 days	7-23 days	3-10 days
Spring	3-11 days	3-9 days	2-7 days
Summer	1-5 days	1-5 days	1-4 days
Fall	2-9 days	2-8 days	2-6 days

Conserving water in your landscape doesn't have to be complicated. This brochure is packed with tips and information to help you improve your landscape while preserving one of our most precious resources. In addition, Florida Certified Horticulture Professionals at your local garden retailer or your County Extension Office are an excellent source of knowledge, so if you need to know something that isn't addressed here, just ask.

But first, a look at why plants are so important and why any time is the right time to green up your yard.

The power of plants

- 1 Take a deep breath, then go out and thank the millions of plants that filter out dust and pollutants from the atmosphere.
- 2 Shade trees and windbreaks reduce energy consumption, which means you pay for less electricity and power plants have to generate less power. In the end, plants save water.
- 3 Plants are an investment: Landscaping adds value to real estate and can speed property sales. Various surveys show value increases from 7 to 15 percent.
- 4 Plants provide habitat for the wild things that share our green spaces, including the small animals in your yard, songbirds and other wildlife.
- 5 On a hot day, lawns will be up to 30 degrees cooler than nearby pavement, producing a moderating effect on the environment.
- 6 Roots and tree canopy stabilize soil and control erosion.
- 7 Strategically placed trees and shrubs can add privacy and reduce traffic noise.
- 8 Vegetation filters pollutants from water flowing toward lakes and streams, reduces runoff and the need for water retention areas.
- 9 Gardening with gusto offers many of the same health benefits as more traditional forms of exercise.
- 10 Beautiful landscapes encourage feelings of relaxation and well-being. Studies show that plants can stimulate healing, as well as intellectual, social, emotional and physical development.

It's best to water established plants deeply, but less often

Getting a good start

Whether it's turf, shrubs or ground covers, one of the best things you can do for your plants is to give them a good foundation with quality soil. Start with at least 6 inches, but 12-18 inches is even better. Trees do best with deeper soil. It's a good idea to test your soil to determine its composition and nutrient needs. County Extension offices can help with this, and kits are available at garden stores. While you're there, ask your local retailer to share their hints for proper planting techniques.



Water conservation takes a can-do attitude

Once you've properly installed your landscaping, it is important to give each plant the correct amount of water at the right frequency, keeping in mind that more isn't always better. New plants need a small amount of water applied frequently. For example, lawns, trees and shrubs establish best with daily irrigation for a few weeks after planting. It's best to water established plants deeply but less often to encourage the development of roots that go deep into the ground for stability and moisture.

A Florida Certified Landscape Professional can help you create a total water-management plan for your yard. Following are some easy ways to be smart with water:

- 3 Add a rain switch to automatic sprinkler systems to prevent wasteful "double watering" on rainy days, and postpone irrigation when rain is predicted.
- 4 Have a container set up to catch rain that does fall, and use collected water on container plants both indoors and out. A drop of oil in the water will deter mosquitoes.
- 5 Water trees and shrubs in the early morning or late evening versus midday, when evaporation is greatest. Note that morning watering may reduce problems with mildews and soil-borne diseases. Early morning is the recommended time to irrigate lawns.
- 6 Check sprinkler systems for leaks. Signs to look for include muddy spots and broken or clogged sprinkler heads. You'll save water — and money, too.

Be sure to check with your local utility office or water management district to obtain the watering schedule for your area.

In general

- 1 Prevent and control weeds, which compete for water and nutrients.
- 2 Trees and shrubs have different water requirements than turf and should be irrigated separately, preferably with a low volume irrigation system. Don't rely on your lawn sprinkler to water your shrubs and trees—during establishment it is not enough, then you will be overwatering those plants once established.

Trees, shrubs, flowers

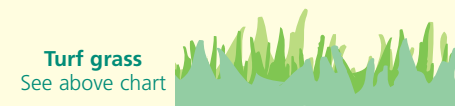
- 1 Don't be fooled: Most established landscape shrubs require little to no watering most of the year. Check the soil moisture level at a depth of 6-8 inches. Water before the plant wilts badly and before soil becomes powder dry. It's normal for some plants to wilt in the afternoon due to heat, especially if they are growing.



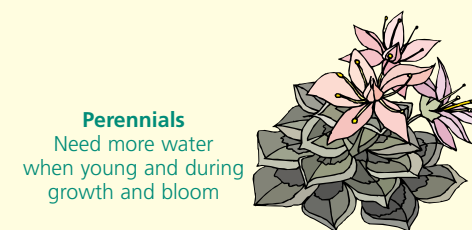
Container plants
1 or more times per day when hot or windy



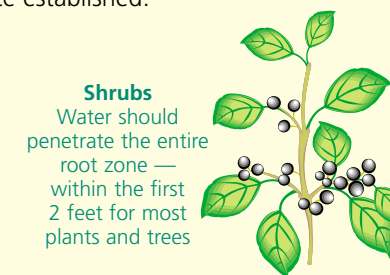
Annual bedding plants
Keep soil moist but not soggy



Turf grass
See above chart



Perennials
Need more water when young and during growth and bloom



Shrubs
Water should penetrate the entire root zone — within the first 2 feet for most plants and trees



Mature, established trees
Without rain, trees may benefit from a thorough watering once a month during the growth period.

MOST OFTEN

WATERING FREQUENCY

LEAST OFTEN

When determining your landscape's water needs, consider the root systems. In general, plants with small, shallow roots require water more often. Recently installed plants need water more often than those that are established.