

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH DROUGHT CONDITIONS

Water use in the home landscape is a hot topic - even in Minnesota. In the Twin Cities we use, on average, three times more water during the summer than in the winter, and much of this water is used outdoors. As urbanization increases and we continue to experience more periods of extreme heat and drought, greater pressure is placed on our water resources. If you own an irrigation system or water your lawn with portable sprinklers, reduce your overall water use by implementing the following water-saving tips.

1. Change Expectations

- Consider changing your expectations for your lawn to allow for temporary discoloration during periods of drought stress. As a lawn brown it enters a state of dormancy, it is NOT dead. When the rain returns your green lawn should too!

2. Select Turfgrasses for your Lawn that are Drought-resistant and Require Less Water

- Implementing drought resistant turfgrass varieties will greatly reduce your lawn's irrigation requirements.
- Fescue species offer the best drought resistance; fine fescues require very little water, and tall fescue contains a deep root system to be able to access moisture deep within the soil.

3. Adjust Irrigation Programs to Conserve Water and Maximize Water-use Efficiency

- To encourage deeper rooting and greater drought resistance, lawns should be irrigated infrequently (once or twice per week), applying no greater than one-inch of irrigation each week.
- Set your irrigation timer to run in the early morning hours; watering during the heat of the day reduces the amount of water absorbed by the soil and made available to the turfgrass.

4. Implement Water-Saving Technologies

- Minnesota statute 103G.298 requires all automated irrigation systems to be furnished with technology which inhibits operation of landscape irrigation systems during periods of sufficient moisture.
- Technologies include rain sensors, soil moisture sensor and Wi-Fi enabled smart irrigation controllers.

5. Pay Attention to the Weather

- Over the past 30-years, the Twin Cities have received 17 inches of rainfall, on average, during June through September. Approximately 4-inches of rainfall occur, on average, during each of those months.
- Best way to save water is to keep your irrigation timer turned 'OFF' and only water your lawn when significant drought symptoms are visible (i.e., manually irrigate).

HOW TO HANDLE WATERING RESTRICTIONS

Odd/Even Watering Ban

- In reality, an Odd/Even watering ban should not influence your watering schedule
- A lawn maintained using the above recommendations should remain healthy and vibrant under this type of watering band
- If you notice dry spots, perform an irrigation audit to determine where your sprinklers are aiming and how much water they are applying

Complete Watering Ban

- Have the knowledge and understanding that your lawn will most likely turn yellow/brown. This is okay and know your lawn is not dead, but simply dormant
- A dormant lawn should not be mowed, have fertilizer added to it, and you should limit the time you spend on the lawn
- A lawn in dormancy can survive ~4 weeks with no water. When consistent rain returns, or the ban is lifted, the lawn will green up after a few weeks.

