

Every Drop Counts

# Smart Water Use

[www.nysefc.org/smartwateruse](http://www.nysefc.org/smartwateruse)



New York State  
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## Tips for Outdoor Maintenance

(including landscaping, pools and spas, turf management, and other outdoor water management issues)

**Please note that these suggested measures are not intended to supersede more stringent federal, state, Tribal, or local health and safety regulations.**

During drought conditions outdoor watering restrictions may be imposed, and therefore some of the following tips will not apply.

Outdoor maintenance includes general information, landscaping, pools and spas, and turf management.

### 1. General

- Wash vehicles less often; use a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- Sweep or blow paved areas to clean, rather than hosing off.

### 2. Landscaping

#### General Landscaping

- Discontinue using water to clean sidewalks, driveways, loading docks, and parking lots. Consider using brooms or motorized sweepers.
- Use irrigation professionals who are WaterSense partners. Go to [http://www.epa.gov/watersense/pubs/ws\\_irrprof.htm](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/pubs/ws_irrprof.htm) for information.
- Use landscape professionals who are familiar with Greenscaping [<http://www.epa.gov/greenscapes/>] or Xeriscaping [<http://www.the-landscape-design-site.com/xeriscaping.html>].
- Sweep or blow paved areas to clean, rather than hosing off.

#### Watering

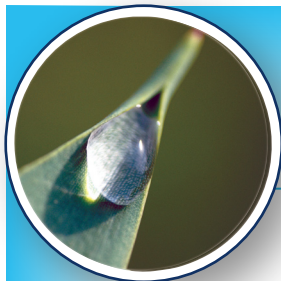
- Detect and repair all leaks in irrigation systems.
- Use properly treated wastewater for irrigation where available.
- Water the lawn or garden during the coolest part of the day (early morning is best).
- Do not water on windy days.
- Water trees and shrubs, which have deep root systems, longer and less frequently than shallow-rooted plants which require smaller amounts of water more often.
- Check with the local extension service for advice on the amount and frequency of watering needed in your area.
- Set sprinklers to water the lawn or garden only—not the street or sidewalk.
- Use soaker hoses and trickle irrigation systems.
- Install moisture sensors on sprinkler systems.

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- Check to make sure you really need to water your lawn and garden. You can input your zip code into the Northeast Regional Climate Center [Lawn Watering Page](#). Using local precipitation data and information on when you watered last, you will see whether it is time to water again.
- For more specific data, at least one Cooperative Extension office provides detailed evapotranspiration (ET) data to aid in irrigation decisions. In Suffolk County, email [twk3@cornell.edu](mailto:twk3@cornell.edu) to obtain your daily or weekly ET number. For other locations, please contact your local extension or Soil and Water Conservation District representative.
- Install a rain barrel to collect roof runoff and use the water for watering plants. You can find out more at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County's [Rain Catchers](#) site.

## Planting

- Have your soil tested for nutrient content and add organic matter if needed. Good soil absorbs and retains water better.
- Minimize turf areas and use native grasses.
- Use native plants in your landscape. They require less care and water than ornamental varieties.
- Learn more about Greenscapes, <http://www.epa.gov/greenscapes/>, a program that provides cost-efficient and environmentally friendly solutions for landscaping.

## Landscape Maintenance

- Use mulch around shrubs and garden plants to reduce evaporation from the soil surface and cut down on weed growth.
- Remove thatch and aerate turf to encourage movement of water to the root zone.
- Raise your lawn mower cutting height. Longer grass blades help shade each other, cut down on evaporation, and inhibit weed growth.
- Minimize or eliminate fertilizing which requires additional watering, and promotes new growth which will also need additional watering.
- In many cases, older, established plants require only infrequent irrigation. Look for indications of water need, such as wilt, change of color, or dry soils.

## Ornamental Water Features

- Do not install or use ornamental water features unless they recycle the water.
- Use signs to indicate that water in the ornamental features is recycled.
- Do not operate ornamental water features during a drought.

## 3. Pools and Spas

- If you have a swimming pool, consider a new water-saving pool filter.
- Lower pool water level to reduce amount of water splashed out.

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- Run filter backwash onto lawns and shrubs or collect for reuse.
- Backwash only when necessary.
- Channel splashed-out pool water into landscaping.
- Keep the pool and filters clean to reduce frequency of filter backwashing.
- Check regularly for cracks and leaks.
- Cover the pool when not in use. Also, consider a solar cover to reduce heating requirements. The average uncovered pool loses one inch of water per week. Pool covers can save 95% of water lost to evaporation. Covers also conserve heat which in turn saves energy and utility costs.
- Ensure that water is absorbed before it leaves your property and avoid allowing runoff to enter adjacent properties. If acid has been used to clean the pool, the water should be neutralized before being allowed to runoff.
- Limit the frequency of pool refilling.
- Reduce the amount of water used to clean pool filters.
- Lower the pool temperature to reduce water loss due to evaporation. Reducing the temperature is particularly important when the pool is not being used.

## 4. Turf Management

- Contact your local water supplier about possible landscape water auditor classes for your golf course managers.
- Design dual watering system with sprinklers for turf and low-volume irrigation for plants, trees, and shrubs.
- Hire a golf course and/or landscape architect with water conservation and xeriscape experience.
- Limit or exclude turf from roughs.
- Operate sprinkler system before sunrise and after sunset. Amount of irrigation can be determined by the evapotranspiration rate.
- Use automatic irrigation systems monitored by moisture probes (i.e., tensiometers).
- Use only low-water use plant material in non-turf areas.
- Use properly-treated waste water for irrigation where available.
- Use turf only where actually necessary; such as picnic areas/outside lunch areas and golf course target areas (greens, tees, landing areas).

