

Spring and Summer Water Use

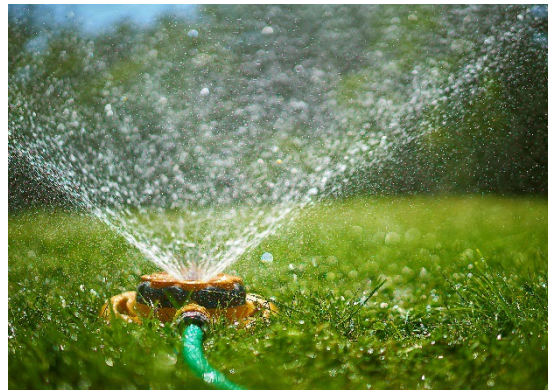
Conserving Water for the Health of Our Local Waterways

As we move into the warmer months, it is important to understand how personal water use affects the overall health of the local watershed. Spring and summer months increase the demand for water to maintain lawns and gardens, as well as for outdoor recreation such as personal pools and sprinkler toys. Excess water from these activities becomes run-off that has the potential to carry harmful pollutants to our local waterways. Being mindful of how and when you use water this season can help mitigate harmful effects and ensure you enjoy all the season has to offer while protecting our waterways.

How and When You Water Matters

Before watering your lawn or garden, check your hose for leaks. Normal wear and tear of hoses may result in holes or ill-fitting connections causing water to leak. Visually inspect your garden and get to know your plants this season. Water according to plant needs to avoid overwatering. Checking the water needs of your soil and plants before planting is an important step to ensure the health of your garden, as well as to avoid oversaturation of the soil and prevent unnecessary run-off.

If you choose to irrigate with sprinklers, check the height, position and for any leaks before use. Irrigating with leaking and/or faulty sprinklers can result in a loss of up to 50% of target water reaching the plants it's intended for. Consider irrigating close to the ground, targeting only areas where the soil needs moisture, for more effective water use. Excess water from poorly positioned or leaky sprinklers has the potential to produce run-off.



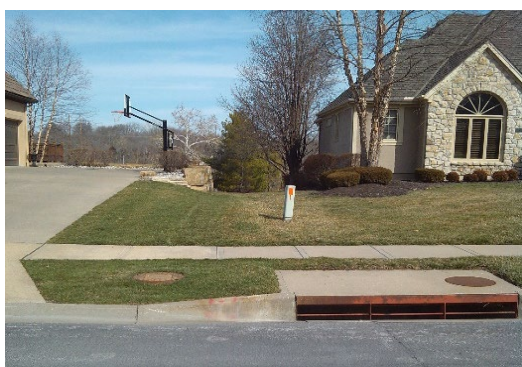
Timing is also important to consider. During the heat of the day, especially in the spring and summer months, water meant for your lawn or garden may evaporate before reaching the roots of the plants. Watering early in the morning or after sunset increases the amount of water that reaches the roots, ultimately conserving water and reducing run-off.



Start at the Root, Plant Native

A long-term solution for conserving water in the spring and summer months is planting a water-smart landscape in place of a traditional lawn or garden. Water-smart landscaping is the practice of planting native species that do not require much additional irrigation in the presence of regular rainfall. Native plants have the advantage of being well-suited to the local weather conditions and thrive once healthily established.

Consider using rocks, gravel, garden stones, or mulch in areas that do not require lawn grasses or garden plants. Mulching can help reduce evaporation, minimize weed growth, moderate soil temperature, and prevent erosion and run-off. To further curb water use, consider planting in organized “hydrozones.” A hydrozone is an area of plants with similar water and sunlight needs that can be managed by irrigating the grouping as a whole (i.e., flowers or vegetables that require a lot of water are managed separately from native grasses or shrubs that require less).



What Can You Do?

Run-off from seasonal activities such as washing a car, hosing down a driveway, watering lawns or gardens and outdoor water recreation has the potential to carry harmful pollutants such as soaps, cleaners, chlorine, dyes, nitrates, phosphates, sediment, etc. to the local watershed. While a single household’s run-off may seem harmless, accumulated run-off has the potential to wreak havoc on the local ecosystem, proving detrimental to aquatic life. Despite this, water

use is an integral part of seasonal home maintenance and recreation, so what can you do to help protect our waterways while still enjoying the warmer weather?

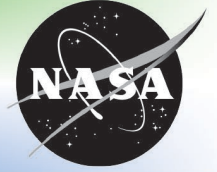
- ✓ Consider sweeping your driveways instead of rinsing them down.
- ✓ Check your hose for leaks and poor connections before watering.





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- ✓ Ensure the height and position of your sprinklers is appropriate for your lawn or garden and check for leaks and run-off.
- ✓ Plant native to reduce the need for additional irrigation.
- ✓ Consider watering your lawn and garden early in the morning or after sunset to prevent evaporation.
- ✓ Be mindful of nearby storm water inlets and the type of water that may enter them from your household activities.

Whether you use water this spring and summer on a lawn or garden, household activities like rinsing driveways and washing cars, or for outdoor recreation, such as personal pools and sprinkler toys, it is important to understand how your water use affects the overall health of the local watershed. Practicing one or more of the methods outlined above will ensure efficient water use this season; your local waterways will thank you!

Visit the following websites for more information on water conservation:

<https://www.epa.gov/watersense/start-saving>

<https://www.epa.gov/watersense/watering-tips>

https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/after_the_storm.pdf

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-01/documents/ws-outdoor-water-efficient-landscaping.pdf>

Check out some of our past environmental bulletins on similar topics here:

<https://code200-external.gsfc.nasa.gov/250/environmental/environmental-bulletins#general-en>

