

Conserving Water In Your Landscape

Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue recently announced a few changes in the state's water plan. While the state is still in a drought, these changes will definitely help those that in counties under level 4 water restrictions. Thomas County is currently under level 2 drought restrictions; outdoor watering is restricted by addresses. Odd addresses are allowed to water outdoors on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays; even-addresses are allowed to water outdoors on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays; outdoor watering times are from midnight to 10 AM; no outdoor watering on Fridays.

With the season of spring starting to show its face, you may be thinking about getting out and watering your landscape. You can follow these tips to help conserve water in your yard.

- Prioritize plants – During a drought focus watering valuable and hard-to-replace trees and shrubs.
- Collect water for watering plants – You can collect water from your air conditioner, and also use of a rain barrel will catch water from your downspouts. Use this water for your valuable plants and flowers.
- Use a lawn aerator – Aeration can improve the movement of water and nutrients into the soil, and improves drought tolerance of your turfgrass. A core-aerator is commonly used for this and it has hollow cones that pull 'plugs' of soil out of your yard.
- "The longer the shoot, the deeper the root" – Raise the deck on your mower to increase the cutting height during drought conditions. Longer blades of grass have roots that are deeper than shorter blades of grass, thereby allowing deeper roots to find moisture. Cutting 1/3 or less of the grass blade and leaving the clippings on the lawn return nutrients back to the soil and decrease thatch problems.
- Mulch – Consider adding mulch to increase depth and area. Mulching from tree trunks to the end of branches can help retain soil moisture underneath trees.
- One inch of water every 7 to 10 days – Most lawns, plants, and shrubs only need one inch of water per 7 to 10 days. Watering 'deep and infrequent' allows plants to better adapt to drought situations.
- Soak the roots – Aim for the base of the plant if using a hose. This allows most of the water to reach the roots.
- Adjust your irrigation system – Properly adjust your sprinkler for time and quantity. Watering between midnight and 10 a.m. reduces evaporation. Measuring the amount of water your sprinkler system puts out per zone lets you know how much time you need to run each zone. Placing shallow pans (tuna cans, cat food cans, other shallow pans) in each zone and measuring the depth of water after your system has run for a specified amount of time can tell you how long your system should run to put one inch of water out. If water begins to puddle during irrigation, stop watering until the soil absorbs the water, then resume irrigation system to finish your one inch of watering. If you need help with adjusting and measuring your system, contact your irrigation installer or feel free to contact me at the extension office – 229.225.4130.

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