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Tips for Water Usage

1. Don't drown

The greatest waste of water comes from applying too much, too often -- much of the water is never absorbed. Instead of watering for one long session, water a few times for shorter periods and take 15-minute breaks in between each session. This will allow water to soak in, while minimizing runoff.

2. Watch the clock

Water between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m. -- when the sun is low, winds are calm and temperatures are cool. Mid-day watering tends to be less efficient because of water loss due to evaporation and windy conditions during the day. Watering in the evening isn't a good idea either because leaves can remain wet overnight -- an open invitation for fungus to grow. By watering in the morning, leaves have a chance to dry out during the day.

3. Divide by zones

Different plants need different amounts of water. Divide your yard and landscape areas into separate irrigation zones so that grass can be watered separately and more frequently than groundcovers, shrubs and trees. Both sprinkler and drip irrigation can be incorporated to achieve more efficient use of water.

4. Water only things that grow

If you have an underground sprinkler system, make sure the sprinkler heads are adjusted properly to avoid watering sidewalks and driveways. A properly adjusted sprinkler head should spray large droplets of water instead of a fine mist to minimize evaporation and wind drift.

5. Consider dripping

When it comes to watering individual trees, flowerbeds, potted containers, or other nongrassy areas, consider applying water directly to the roots using low volume drip irrigation. This will reduce water waste through evaporation or runoff, and will prevent unwanted weeds from growing.

6. Do routine inspections

Lawns and gardens should be watered in the early morning hours, a problem may not be discovered until it is too late. Periodically check your sprinklers to make sure everything is working properly. A clogged head or a torn line can wreak havoc on your landscape and water bill.

7. Be rain smart

Adjust your irrigation system as the seasons and weather change. Or better yet, install a shut-off device that automatically detects rain or moisture. These devices are inexpensive and enable you to take advantage of the water without having paying for it.