

What is a water-efficient landscape?

A water-efficient landscape uses plants and designs that save water and are well-suited to local climate and soil conditions. It requires little to no supplemental water, even during peak summer months.



Image: www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org

What are the benefits of a water-efficient landscape?

Reduced water use. Almost half of household water usage is applied to the landscape. Managing this resource helps lower your water bill.

Less maintenance. Water efficient landscapes require less care and fewer fertilizers and pesticides.

Improved property value. A well-maintained water-efficient landscape adds color and style to a home, increasing “curb appeal.”

Provides wildlife habitat. Native plants invite birds, butterflies, and other wildlife to the landscape.

Helpful Resources

Energy-Wise Landscape Design: A New Approach for Your Home and Garden
By Sue Reed

Great Plant Picks
<http://www.greatplantpicks.org/>

Jefferson County Master Gardener Foundation
<http://jcmgf.org/mg11>

Washington Native Plant Society
<http://www.wnps.org/index.html>

Waterwise Plants for Sustainable Gardens: 200 Drought-Tolerant Choices for all Climates
by Lauren Springer Ogden and Scott Ogden

WSU Extension Jefferson County
<http://county.wsu.edu/jefferson/Pages/default.aspx>



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Water-Efficient Landscapes

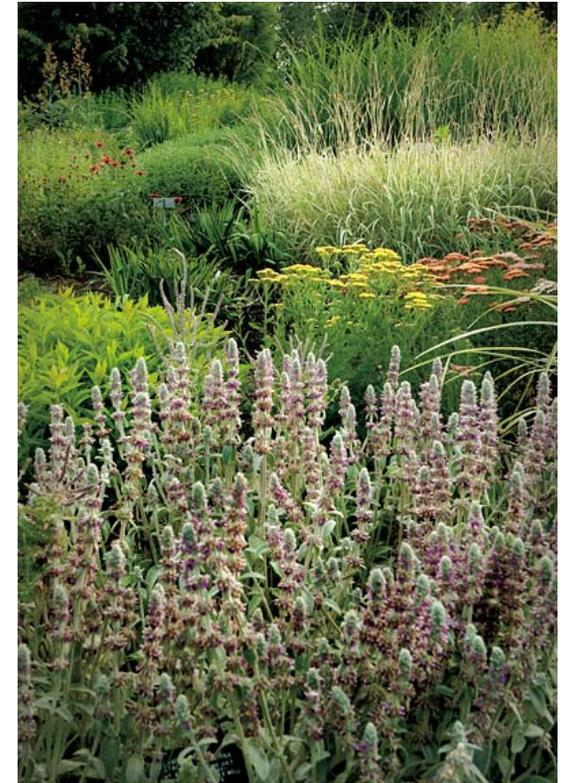


Image: wsm.wsu.edu

Water efficient landscapes are one method of low impact development (LID) used to effectively manage stormwater runoff.

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Planning and Caring for Your Water-Efficient Landscape

Plan Before You Plant

Developing a landscape plan is the first and most important step in creating a water-efficient landscape. Your plan should take into account the regional and microclimatic conditions of the site, existing vegetation, topography, intended uses of the property, and grouping plants by water needs. Also consider the plants' sun and shade requirements and preferred soil conditions. A well-thought-out landscape plan can serve as your roadmap in creating a beautiful landscape that can be continually improved over time.

Choose the Right Plants

Use native and drought-tolerant plants. Since natives are adapted to the local climate, they require little water beyond normal rainfall once they're established.

Plant in Hydrozones

Group plants with similar water and sunlight needs, so they can be watered efficiently by the same sprinkler or zone.

Improve Your Soil

Soils rich in organic matter retain water and support plant growth. Incorporating a 4 to 6 inch layer of compost improves its texture, holds moisture in the soil, and provides nutrients for plants. Compost can also be added as a topdressing to existing lawns.

Grow Practical Lawns

Lawns require substantially more water than planting beds. To better manage outdoor water use, plant turfgrass only where it has a practical function, such as play and recreation areas. Select a type of grass that can withstand drought or go dormant during dry, hot weather. Don't create narrow lawn strips that are hard to water and mow efficiently. Don't plant lawn on steep slopes that are hard to water without runoff. Plant shade trees on the south and west side of lawns to cut water use.



Image: www.galbraithla.com/

Use Mulch

Apply a layer of mulch to planting beds to conserve soil moisture, inhibit weed growth, and moderate soil temperature. Organic mulches also improve the soil condition as they decompose. A few inches of bark, wood chips, or compost on the soils surface can reduce water needs by 30 to 50%.

Provide Regular Maintenance

All landscapes require some degree of care throughout the year. Replenish mulch in planting beds once a year, and remove weeds as needed. Mow turfgrass only when it reaches 2 to 3 inches to promote deeper root growth and a more drought resistant lawn.

Water Wisely

Giving each area of your garden just the right amount of water is the key to growing healthy plants with less work.

- Let the soil be your watering guide. Dig in to check soil moisture and get a good sense of how often and long to water. The goal is to moisten the soil a little deeper than roots grow, and let the soil surface dry out some before watering again. Deep watering promotes strong root growth, which supports plants during drought.
- Water early in the day to reduce evaporation.
- Use timers that screw into hose bib to limit watering and make early morning irrigation convenient.
- Place and adjust sprinklers to water plants, not pavement or walls. Use sprinklers with spray patterns that match the area needing water.
- Repair leaky faucets and hoses. Even small leaks waste lots of water.
- Use soaker hoses and drip irrigation systems to apply water directly to the soil with little waste by evaporation or runoff.
- Install a rain sensor to stop watering after it rains. Rain shutoffs are economical and simple to install.
- Adjust watering schedules to match weather changes.
- Collecting rainwater with rain barrels or cisterns is a great way to further reduce water consumption. Diverting your downspouts into covered barrels is an easy, low-cost approach.