

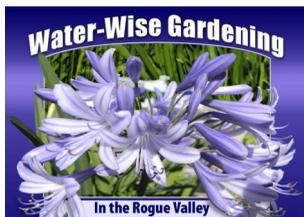
Every summer, the Medford Water Commission offers sprinkler checkups to its customers in an effort to conserve water and enhance landscape health. To schedule an appointment for this **free** service, contact MWC conservation staff at:

**541-774-2436**



**For more information about water-wise landscaping and irrigation, please visit:**

[www.medford.watersmartgardening.com](http://www.medford.watersmartgardening.com)



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## Landscaping to Save Water



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## 7 Steps to a Beautiful Water-Wise Landscape



*Local water use during summer months is often more than three times higher than winter water usage levels, with most of the increase being tied to irrigation of landscapes. Unfortunately, much of this water is wasted due to poor sprinkler system design, maintenance or scheduling. Additionally, a significant amount of water is used to irrigate impractical lawn areas. By using water-wise landscaping and irrigation, summer water usage could be reduced by 30% or more.*

*Water-wise landscaping does not require the sacrifice of a yard's beauty. In fact, it can be customized to create any style desired — from formal courtyards to edible gardens to lush backyard retreats. When done properly, water-wise landscaping can be simply stunning, with lots of color and diverse shapes and textures.*

*This brochure will help in designing a water-wise landscape that will excite the senses while saving time and money, reducing maintenance and adding value and beauty to a property.*

Follow these seven principles for a healthy and functional water-wise landscape:

- ◆ **Proper Planning and Design**
- ◆ **Practical Turf Areas**
- ◆ **Appropriate Plant Selection**
- ◆ **Soil Improvement**
- ◆ **Efficient Irrigation**
- ◆ **Use of Mulches**
- ◆ **Appropriate Maintenance**



### Proper Planning and Design

Every great landscape starts with a good plan. A plan will also enable the completion of a landscaping project in phases as time and money allow.

Start by considering what purposes the new landscape will serve. Take natural drainage, shade and privacy needs into account, as well as desired decks or walkways, easements and immovable landscape elements, including utility boxes. Also, be sure to include any slope in the design. For example, the use of terraces and/or low water use groundcovers are the best choices for steeply sloped areas.

Rough drawings are adequate in the early design stages, but more accurate drawings should be prepared before starting installation. And always plan for enough space around new plants to accommodate their size at maturity.

## Practical Turf Areas

Many homes have much more lawn than is functional. Turf grass has high-water needs, so install it only in places where it will serve a purpose, such as areas for children or pets to run. Synthetic lawn can also be used for such areas, requiring no irrigation and little maintenance. Lawn areas that are narrow or unused can also be replaced with attractive footpaths, shrub beds, gardens or alcoves.



## Appropriate Plant Selection

Plants should be grouped according to their sun and water

needs. Take the time to thoroughly observe the area to be landscaped, identifying daily sun patterns and any natural water sources. When selecting desired plants, consider their mature sizes, sun preferences and water requirements.

This step is particularly important if a new irrigation system is to be installed, as it will help to group plants with similar water needs into separate irrigation zones. Remember that in areas with natural moisture, such as low spots or shady areas, plants may need less irrigation.

## Soil Improvement

Heavy clay soil is very common in Medford and nearby communities. Clay absorbs water slowly and is easily compacted, so water often runs off after a short time.



The most effective time to enhance soil is prior to planting or re-planting, so take advantage of the opportunity. But simply adding a layer of topsoil doesn't necessarily add nutrients and can result in distinct soil layers that inhibit root growth. Instead, generously add aged compost and sand to native clay soil in a 1:1:1 ratio, blending them all together. It will loosen the soil, improve water absorption and lead to healthier plants.

## Efficient Irrigation

Follow these tips to improve your irrigation system's efficiency and performance:

### Irrigation Design

- ◆ Place sprinklers in corners and around edges in lawn areas, not just in the center. Also, be sure that sprinkler spray patterns overlap with adjacent sprinklers.
- ◆ Lawn requires water to be applied very evenly and more frequently than most shrubs, so make sure to put lawn areas within separate irrigation zones.
- ◆ Tree and shrub zones are best served by drip irrigation systems or bubblers that deliver water directly to the roots.
- ◆ Select sprinkler types and nozzles that can closely match the size and shape of the area to be watered. Use only one sprinkler type within an irrigation zone.

- ◆ Excessive water pressure is hard on sprinkling systems and causes large amounts of water waste. Add pressure regulation if the water pressure at your property exceeds the pressure range specified for the sprinklers being used.
- ◆ Health codes require the installation of backflow prevention devices on all irrigation systems. For more information, contact your water provider.

### Sprinkler Operation

- ◆ Watering too much can waste a lot of water. Become familiar with your sprinkler controller and tailor your watering schedule to match the current weather.
- ◆ Watering schedules typically should differ between zones due to different sprinkler types, sun exposures and plant water needs.
- ◆ Water between dusk and dawn to reduce the amount of water lost to evaporation.
- ◆ Plants need oxygen from the soil. Avoid daily watering so the soil can dry a little and allow some oxygen in.
- ◆ Instead of applying the entire daily sprinkling in one cycle, split the time into two or more shorter cycles, each separated by *only about an hour*. This will help water soak down deeply to plant roots instead of running off.
- ◆ Drip zones can often be run less frequently than lawn zones.



## Use of Mulches

Mulching around plants can help keep the soil cool, reduce evaporation, and inhibit weeds. Apply about two inches of mulch in planter beds, keeping it few inches away from plant bases. Wood chips, pine needles, bark and gravel are examples of common mulching materials.

## Appropriate Maintenance

To keep sprinkler systems operating at their best, give them regular maintenance. Make sure to observe the system running at least monthly to check for problems, such as leaks or misaligned sprinklers. Remember to adjust the sprinkling schedule as the weather changes.

Mowing lawn areas high (about 3-4 inches) will reduce lawn stress and discourage weed growth. Leave the clippings on the lawn to act as a natural source of nutrients.

Examine shrub and tree areas closely a few times a year to check for pest or disease problems. As plants grow, prune around sprinklers and add more or bigger drip emitters to meet the increased water needs of larger plants. Organic mulches will break down over time, so re-apply them in planter beds when needed. Also, if changing landscaping elements in the future, be sure to retrofit the irrigation system accordingly.

