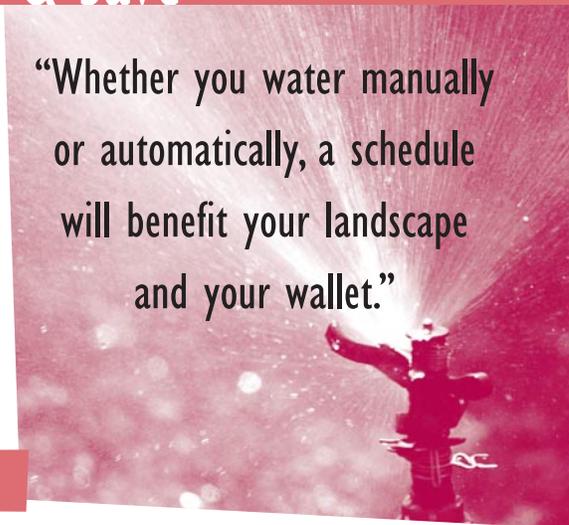


# Water Wisely & Save

**Water is one of our most precious resources. Unfortunately, in our dry summer climate, we do not have an endless supply and we must try to conserve whenever we can. Outdoor watering makes up for about half of the average home's total use. Studies have shown that many gardens and landscapes are overwatered or watered inefficiently. There are many opportunities for conserving and we hope these tips will help you save water while reducing your water bill. Let's save for the future!**

**“Whether you water manually or automatically, a schedule will benefit your landscape and your wallet.”**



### Proper Watering Means Healthier Plants

Plants properly watered are healthier and they show it – with more blooms, better looking foliage, and increased resistance to pests and disease. How much water plants need and how often depends on the weather, soil conditions, and the type of plant.

Clay soils, predominant in Contra Costa County, are slow to absorb water but once wet, dry out slowly. They have to be watered carefully to avoid wasteful runoff. One of the best ways to do this is to use repeat cycles – water until runoff or puddling occurs, shut the water off, let it soak in, then rewater. Repeat the process if necessary. If your irrigation system has a timer, use it to start and stop your system automatically.

The best way to improve clay soil is to work in generous amounts of organic matter like compost, ground bark, or leaf mold.

#### When Watering

- Water deeply. This leads to deeper roots and a larger soil reservoir from which to draw moisture. Deeper roots will also help a plant get through dry periods.
- In general, lawns should be watered to a depth of about 6 to 8 inches; annuals and perennials should be watered to a depth of about 12 to 18 inches; shrubs should be watered to a depth of 12 to 30 inches; and trees, to a depth of 2 to 3 feet.
- You can check water penetration by probing the soil with a stiff wire or metal rod. It will move easily through moist soil, and be harder to push or will stop when it reaches dry soil.
- Adjust watering schedules with the seasons. Water less often in the cool weather of fall and spring, more frequently during summer. Don't water during the wet season.

- Water early in the day when winds are calm and temperatures are cool. You'll lose less water to evaporation.

#### When Planting....

- Use drought tolerant plants if possible.
- Group plants with similar water needs so they can be irrigated together.
- Limit the size of lawns (the thirstiest part of the landscape). Use drought tolerant ground covers or hardscape like patios and decks. Don't plant lawns on slopes or narrow parking strips because they are hard to water efficiently.
- Plant in fall to give your plants the upcoming wet season to become established.

