

Drought Condition Gardening Tips

Californian gardeners are facing severe drought conditions and mandatory water restrictions, and the predictions for drought relieve are not good. Whether we are in dry spell conditions or have lots of water at our disposal, it is always a good idea to be efficient with our water usage. With that said, here are some water conservation tips that will help you save water and still be able to appreciate and enjoy your garden.



1. Lawns don't require everyday water! This may surprise you but it is much better to water your lawn twice a week for a longer amount of time than water daily. During warm periods, or in case of browning, supplement with additional water if and when needed. You may have heard the saying "brown is the new green", but with a little bit of planning and water management brown lawns can be avoided as long as possible.

2. Water deeply. Whether you water by hand, use a lawn sprinkler or a drip system, or a combination of those, it is essential to remember that it is normally much better to water for a longer amount of time compared to sprinkling lightly everyday. By sprinkling for longer periods the water is able to soak deeply into the soil which encourage the development of a deep root system and will aid in less stress and dry spell health conditions. Whenever feasible, water early in the early morning or early evening to lower the amount of water lost as a result of evaporation.

3. Raise your lawn mower settings. During the hot summer month do not mow your grass too close to the root to prevent the hot summer rays from burning the roots. It also reduces water loss and helps lower soil temperatures.

4. Feed your yard every 6 to 8 weeks as opposed to month-to-month to lessen extreme growth.

5. Acquaint yourself with your plants water needs. The amount of water your plants require does change throughout the year, as well as throughout the plant's lifetime. Young plants generally need more constant and regular watering than well established plants. In the winter month most plants will not require much water since they are in dormancy or a slowed growth pattern. In the spring season, as plants are awakening from dormancy, increased watering is needed to improve and maintain new development. Frequent watering is required in the hot summer month, and during dry spells. Plants may require additional watering depending on heat exposure. A lot will depend upon the age and also location of your plants. Well established trees and bushes require less water vs. newly planted.



6. Replace some of your "high thirst" plants with more "low thirst" plants. As you reduce your water use, selectively remove plants from your yard that do not do well under water restriction and drought conditions. As you recognize these plants, replace them with plants that need less water such as: jasmines, salvias, gauras, succulents like sedums, sempervivums, graptoverias, and also echeverrias, manzanitas, ceanothus, grevillea, Australian fuchsia, crape myrtles, phormiums,

Mexican feather turf, carex lawns, blue fescue, nandinas, cistus(rockrose) and others. You might even consider switching your lawn with a different, more drought resistant grass or opt for an artificial lawn.



7. Mulch around your plants. One method to save water is to use mulch around your plants at the very least yearly. Mulch assists in keeping the ground from drying too quickly. Remember, do not mulch too close to the base of your plants because the plants still need air circulation around their root systems.

8. Be aware of water leaks. It is always a good idea to check your sprinkler system at least twice a year for leaks and water wastage. A broken line or a missing emitter could squander a whole lot of water. If you are experiencing water runoff, adjust the length of time of sprinkling or re-adjust/change the sprinkler heads or drip emitters. If you are using sprinklers to sprinkle your perennials, bushes, and trees, consider switching over to a drip system for those areas. Drip systems are a great way to help save water and keep your plants happy as they get watered near the root.



Take note: Governor Brown has called on all Californians to reduce their water use by 20 percent and prevent water waste – visit SaveOurH2O.org to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit Drought.CA.Gov to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.



All Californians are expected to stop: washing down driveways and sidewalks; watering of outdoor landscapes that cause excess runoff; using a hose to wash a motor vehicle, unless the hose is fitted with a shut-off nozzle, and using potable water in a fountain or decorative water feature, unless the water is recirculated. You could be facing a fine of up to \$500 a day for failure to implement the conservation requirements, so be aware and do your part.

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