



# ***Maintaining the Home***

## ***Outdoor Water Conservation Tips***

# ***Maintaining the Home: Outdoor Water Conservation Tips***

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## **To Help Save Water Outdoors:**

### **Automatic irrigation systems save time and water**

An automatic sprinkler system can be set to water the lawn for a specified amount of time. This saves time and waters the lawn evenly. If you don't have an automatic sprinkling system, set a kitchen timer. A lot of water can be wasted in a short period of time if you forget to turn your sprinklers off. Outdoor faucets can flow at rates as high as 300 gallons per hour.

### **Use a cistern to collect rainwater**

One thousand square feet of roof or pavement can collect 420 gallons of water from 1 inch of rain. Rooftops or any sloping surface, such as a driveway, are prime catchments. Store the collected water in a cistern and siphon it to water your garden or wash your car. A plastic or metal garbage can easily converts to a cistern by attaching a spigot and hose. Locate your cistern close to where you plan to use the water and consider the massive weight of such a tank if you plan to put it on your roof. To filter out leaves and debris, install a removable screen at the entrance to the cistern.

### **Spot water**

Drier areas require more water than areas where water settles. If necessary, water dry areas by hand.

### **Use a soil probe to test soil moisture**

Water only when a soil probe shows dry soil or a screwdriver is difficult to push into the soil.

### **Water the lawn only when needed**

Step on the grass. If it springs back up when you move your foot, it does not need water.

### **Don't water the pavement**

Position sprinklers so that water lands on the lawn or garden, not in areas where it is not needed. Also avoid watering when it is windy. Wind causes water to evaporate quickly and blows water onto areas where it is not needed. Remember, if it doesn't grow, don't water it!

### **Water without waste**

Interrupt watering when puddles or runoff occur. This allows the water to penetrate into the soil before resuming irrigation.

### **Plant drought resistant trees and plants**

Landscape with plants that require less water. These plants can be very attractive and can survive drought better than turf. Rocks, gravel, benches and deck areas can all be used to creatively decorate the yard.

### **Consider drip irrigation systems around trees and shrubs**

Drip systems permit water to flow slowly to roots, encouraging strong root systems. These systems also reduce evaporation.

### **Keep lawn free of weeds**

Weeds are water thieves and will rob your plants of water and nutrients. Spot spray or remove weeds as they appear.

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**Accept a less than lush lawn**

Grass will naturally go dormant during periods of drought, but will readily regenerate when water becomes available. Reduce traffic on stressed turf areas if possible.

**Match fertilizer to plant requirement**

Fertilizer applications require additional water. Excess fertilizer stimulates top growth, often to the detriment of the root system. Learn to accept turf grasses with low water needs.

**Mow as infrequently as possible**

Mowing puts the grass under additional stress that requires more water.

**Mow higher than normal**

Longer leaf surfaces promote deeper rooting and shade the root zone. Never remove more than one third of the leaf blade in one mowing. Return mulched clippings to the lawn.

**Use a broom to clean the driveway and sidewalk**

Sweeping sufficiently cleans driveways and sidewalks without wasting gallons of water.

**Don't let the water run while washing the car**

Get the car wet, then turn off the water while you soap the car with a bucket of soapy water. Turn on the water again for a final rinse. Use the bucket of soapy water on the flowerbed or garden.

**Don't use the sprinklers just to cool off or for play**

Running through water from a hose or sprinkler is fun but wastes gallons of water.

**Check for leaks in pipes, hoses and faucets**

All leaks waste water. Repair or replace any equipment leaking water.

**Cover your swimming pool**

Covering a swimming pool will help reduce evaporation. An average-sized pool can use about 1,000 gallons of water per month if left uncovered. A pool cover can cut the loss by up to 90 percent.

**Recycle your pool water**

Backwashing or draining your pool into the street is against the City of Las Cruces Waste Water Ordinance. Use your pool water to irrigate your lawn, plants, trees and shrubs. Once you recycle as much water as possible, find your sanitary sewer cleanout. Remove the cap and pump the pool water into the sewer at a rate not to exceed 20 gallons per minute; a faster rate could cause back up into your house. Pump rentals are available at swimming pool supply stores and equipment rental companies.

**Use shut-off nozzles on hoses**

Shut-off nozzles completely turn off the water when you are not using it.

**Move sprinkler heads away from curbs or sidewalks**

A mulch, bark or rock area at least 8 inches wide adjacent to sidewalks and curbs will help eliminate water waste.

This material was adapted from publications produced by the City of Albuquerque, N.M. City of Albuquerque information can be found on the Web at <http://www.cabq.gov>.

*This resource is one in a series on **Maintaining the Home** which include:*

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