

WATER-WISE IRRIGATION EQUIPMENT

What is the most efficient irrigation system for nonturf areas?

Drip irrigation. It is the most efficient method of watering bedded plants, trees, or shrubs. Soaker hoses are an easy and inexpensive alternative to drip irrigation.

What type of sprinkler should I use for the lawn?

One that produces large drops of water close to the ground. Don't use a sprinkler that produces a mist or fine spray. Use a timer so you don't forget to turn the sprinkler off.

How should I manage my automatic sprinkler system for water efficiency?

Adjust the settings as needed. Don't just set the system in the spring and leave it on all season. Some controllers turn off the system when a measured amount of water is used, and rain shut-off devices prevent watering in the rain.

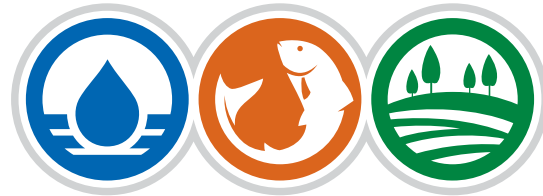
Not all plants have the same watering requirements. Reduce the run time of sprinklers on shrubs that may not need as much water as grass. Shady areas may not need as much water either.



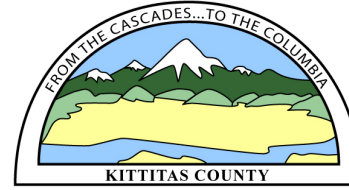
THE YAKIMA BASIN INTEGRATED PLAN

After decades of disagreement over water issues in the Yakima Basin, a coalition of partners with different interests formed the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan.

Kittitas County is working with our Integrated Plan partners to implement a suite of projects ranging from increased water storage and water conservation to habitat restoration and fish passage. These projects work together to manage water for future generations in the Yakima Basin.



YAKIMA BASIN DROUGHT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



KITTITAS COUNTY RURAL LANDOWNERS

WATER CONSERVATION



DROUGHT

During drought there is not enough water to meet all water rights. This water supply shortage means water users must cut back (those with pro-ratable rights) or cease (those with junior rights) water use.

Kittitas County has worked to secure legal protections of small scale domestic well use, even during times of drought. This protection is limited to indoor uses and irrigation of up to 500 square feet of lawn or garden.

Kittitas County residents must use our limited and precious water resources efficiently, in all years, and especially during droughts. By reducing the amount of water we need and waste, we can save water and protect the quality of life of current and future rural Kittitas County landowners.

DESIGN A WATER-WISE LANDSCAPE

Limit Areas that Require Regular Irrigation

Limit your use of water thirsty vegetation, such as grass turf, vegetable gardens, non-native ornamental plants.

Grow Drought-Adapted Plants

Choose plants that are drought and heat tolerant and can survive the minimum winter temperatures in your local area. Drought-tolerant groundcover can be a better option than grass in areas that are narrow, small, sloping, odd-shaped, or close to pavement.



Consider Native Plant Species

Native plants are adapted to natural conditions, including local soils, temperatures, fire regime, and precipitation. Natives plants can be an option for a wide range of uses on your property such as range or pasture grass, trees and shrubs for windbreaks, to decorative landscaping.

Native plants suitable for the habitat type where they are placed do not need to be watered after they are established.

LEARN ABOUT HERITAGE GARDENS

Heritage Gardens are landscaped areas designed to honor the cultural & natural heritage of the Columbia River Basin while utilizing sustainable gardening practices.



Visit the Heritage Garden Demonstration Project at Whipple Park in Ellensburg

The Kittitas County Conservation District Provides:

- Information and education of creating a Heritage Garden;
- Review of your design and plant selection before you plant;
- Firewise landscaping consideration;
- Certification of your heritage garden.



WATER-WISE LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Irrigation Best Practices

Thorough but infrequent watering will help grass and shrubs develop deep roots. It is especially important to start this during the spring when root growth is at its peak.

Over-watered turf will have a short root system and will not be drought tolerant. By slowly adjusting to successively longer periods between watering, the turf can grow deeper roots and become more drought tolerant.

What time of day should I water?

Early in the morning is best. Otherwise, the water can evaporate between the sprinkler and grass before reaching the ground and even from the soil after the water soaks in.

How can I conserve soil moisture?

Use lots of mulch. It will make your shrubs, trees, and flower beds more tolerant to the scorching summer heat.

Mulch applied to the landscape can:

- retain moisture
- reduce runoff
- help moderate soil temperatures
- aid in root development
- reduce erosion
- slow weed growth
- prevent soil compaction
- make your landscape beautiful

Place mulch directly on the soil or weed barrier fabric that can “breathe.” Avoid using sheet plastic in planting areas.

Apply a thin layer of compost to the lawn. It functions like mulch, increases organic content, and protects grass roots.

When should I mow?

Only when the grass is dry. And don't cut more than one-third of its length at one time. Taller grass holds moisture better, encourages deeper root growth, and is less susceptible to browning. Keep grass about 3 inches tall during the summer (taller than 3 inches stresses the grass).

What should I know about fertilizing?

Apply fertilizer in the spring and fall. It helps develop good root systems to keep your grass more drought tolerant.

Don't overuse fertilizer because it can run off and pollute local waterways. Too much fertilizer will also increase the grass's need for water. For soil testing information and recommendations for fertilizer.

How else can I improve my landscape?

High quality soil helps reduce irrigation needs by retaining water better. Unless the soil is damaged or depleted, native and well-adapted plants may not require imported soil. Aerate the lawn once a year. Weed the lawn and garden as needed. Weeds rob other plants of valuable water.

If the soil is rocky, sandy, shallow, heavy clay, or has little organic matter, consider using raised planting beds. They are simple to install and can add interest and beauty to your landscape.

How else can I minimize outdoor water use?

Don't spray patios and walkways - sweep them instead.

Cover pools and spas when not in use to lessen evaporation.

Turn off decorative fountains on windy days and during drought.