



Healthy Garden Tips

University of California Cooperative Extension - Santa County (951) 938-2611

WISE WATERING OF LANDSCAPES

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Many people over-water landscape plants by watering too frequently and by not adjusting watering frequency with the season. The simplified guidelines below can help you apply the right amount of water at correct intervals. These guidelines use the water budget method and make use of recent California field research. It is intended as a guide for educational purposes only and may not fit all situations.

Adjust water application to seasonal plant water demand. Plants use water to cool leaves and to counteract the sun's energy. Soil temperature and plant water use varies with season. The guide on the reverse of this page shows typical annual plant water use from April through October in the Santa County area. This watering, especially for high maintenance turfgrass and flower beds, requires adjustment of automatic timers to seasonal demand.

Group plants into water use zones according to plant size and type. Plant species vary in their water needs. However, plant size and rooting depth are more important considerations. To simplify, landscapes can be divided into five major water budget groups. The recommended irrigation depth by watering water in a 16 in. can.

Group 1. Turfgrass and flower beds. These have relatively shallow roots and require frequent, shallow watering. Apply a minimum of 1/4 inch of water (measuring using a 16 in. can) each time. Adjust the number of days between each watering as suggested in the table on the back of this page. Overwatering often causes root rot and disease.

Group 2. Fruit trees and perennial flowers. These have roots that extend from the top soil to three feet of soil. Some perennials require more than a foot of water and plant large fruits or flow require more water than trees comparable in category 1, below. One full tree and perennial require watering every two weeks with a minimum watering 2 1/2 inches measured along the can of water. Overwatering is rarely a problem.

Group 3. Established background shrubs. These plants need 10-day watering only, but should not produce much growth each year. Some grow in top 1 foot, so water monthly with a minimum of 2 inches of water. This watering schedule should produce healthy plants requiring a minimum of attention. Overwatering is rare.

Group 4. Old established shade trees. Older trees have extensive, broad root systems, but still require regular watering to maintain a dense canopy structure. Water the entire area shaded by the trees twice per year. Apply at least 2 inches of water in mid-June and repeat in mid-September. These waterings are timed to provide maximum benefit and avoid excessive water stress. Supplemental water can then be used to reduce watering volume needed by reflected heat from roofs or pavement. Keep all water at least 10 feet away from the trunk of mature oak trees.

Jan 1999

Additional Reading

- "Landscape Requirements Using Water-Budgeting Method," UC-809, revised 1998.
- "Irrigation Scheduling: A Guide for Growers and Home Landscapers," UC-808 Published 1996.
- "Soil and Water Management for the Home Gardener," UC-807, 1997/1998, 1999.

A GUIDE TO HOME WATERING

AVERAGE CLIMATE (DENVER, ESTIMATED)

APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
50°	F	1-50°	1-60°	1-60°	F	50°

AMOUNT TO WATER

1/2" to 1" Water (Soil 2-4")



Moistly	every 3 days	every 3 days	2 times per week	every 4-5 days	every 5-6 days	every 10-14 days
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Established Flower Trees & Perennial Shrubs (2" to 4")

Deep Soak 1-2 feet every other week

Deep Soak September 15 to October 15th

Established Shrubs (2" to 4")



Deep Soak monthly in wet 2 feet soil depth

Established Shrub Trees (2" to 4")

Deep Soak 1-2 feet 2-3 times

every other week

Deep Soak to 10" depth August

Established Trees Only

No Water Added

Under Normal Conditions

NOTE: Watering schedules may require more frequent irrigation. Deep water by soil and air temperature over 80°F require extra water, as extra water available to reach ground.

Water 1" and deep enough to be sufficient to encourage the roots to grow in deeper soil. Minimize water stress early in shallow soil (1-2" deep), until both soil and root supply sufficient amounts of water.

This guide is based on average conditions and is not foolproof. It assumes the water applied is good quality and the soil is available to the plant roots. Other applied water may drain surface into the ground's subsurface not available to the plant system.

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