

A Healthier You WaterSense®



Public Health
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Timing is Everything

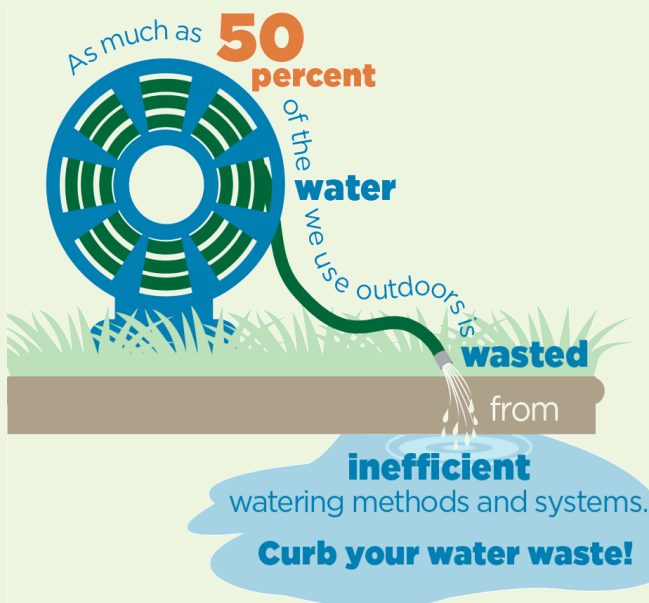


No matter what kind of yard or landscape you have, it's important to know exactly how much water your plants need before you turn on the sprinkler. Smart watering practices that reduce runoff may decrease the need for pesticides and fertilizers,

which can impact the health of streams, lakes and wildlife. Keeping the following questions in mind when you do water can help you maintain a beautiful and healthy yard without wasting water or money.

Contact your local water utility to find out exactly how much and when you should be watering in your area.

Following are some guidelines to consider:



http://www.epa.gov/watersense/outdoor/watering_tips.html

When?

Avoid watering in the middle of the day when the hot sun will evaporate much of the water before it can get to thirsty plants.

How often?

The answer depends on several factors, including where you live, recent weather conditions, and the type of plants in your landscape. A rule of thumb for many areas of the country is that lawns only need up to one inch of water a week, including rainfall. Shrubs, trees, and other perennials generally will need even less because of their deeper root structure. Check with Rutgers Cooperative Extension at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/> or your local water utility for expert advice on watering needs in your area.

How long?

If water begins to pool, turn off your sprinkler to prevent overwatering and runoff. Watering plants, including turfgrass, too much or too frequently can drown plants or result in shallow roots. Overwatering can lead to a host of other problems including weed growth, disease, fungus, and stormwater runoff that pollutes local waterways with fertilizers and pesticides. Remember, most of your plants will need less water than your turfgrass.

What else?

When the rain does come, saving water from storms is a great way to supplement your efficiency measures. Barrels or cisterns can be used to harvest rain water for irrigation and other outdoor water uses. Check with your local water utility for possible product rebates.



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Healthy Lawns Healthy Water



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After a long, snow-filled winter, many residents are looking forward to outdoor springtime tasks such as cleaning flower beds, spreading mulch and tuning up lawn mowers. Somerset County Department of Health and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are encouraging residents to take a few minutes to become knowledgeable about reformulated fertilizers available throughout the state, and learn how to take other steps to reduce the impacts of poor lawn care practices on the environment.

The sale and use of reformulated lawn fertilizer products is now mandatory throughout New Jersey. In keeping with this requirement, manufacturers are providing fertilizers with reduced nitrogen and zero phosphorous content for use in most typical lawn care situations. These products are better for the environment and are still good for your lawn. Using them, and using them properly is the responsible thing to do.

Nitrogen and phosphorus are nutrients required for plant growth. A limited amount of these nutrients is important for healthy plant life. Too much, however, can be unhealthy for lawns. These nutrients, when carried by stormwater into lakes, rivers and streams, can stimulate excessive algae and aquatic weed growth, reducing dissolved oxygen and sunlight needed for healthy aquatic life.

Spring is an excellent time to assess all of your gardening practices, including looking for ways to reduce the amount of chemicals you use in your yard.



Here are some healthy gardening tips:



- ❏ Soil tests can help identify what nutrients your lawn needs – or you may find out you don't need fertilizer at all. Don't use fertilizer if you don't need it. Contact your County Extension Agent at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/> for details and other helpful lawn and garden information.
- ❏ Choose a no phosphorus and slow-release nitrogen fertilizer. Check the first and second number on the package for nitrogen and phosphate content. Formula, 26-0-3, for example, means no phosphate.
- ❏ Apply fertilizer at the spreader setting shown on the bag, to avoid overuse or underuse of product.
- ❏ Return any unused product to the original container for future use.
- ❏ Do not apply fertilizer products if a heavy rain is predicted.
- ❏ Use a drop spreader or a rotary spreader with a side guard to keep fertilizer on the lawn and off driveways, roadways and walkways. Sweep up excess fertilizer from paved surfaces.
- ❏ For a healthier, greener lawn, fertilize after the first lawn cutting in the spring and again in the fall, when weather conditions are best for grass to absorb nutrients.

For more information visit the Healthy Lawns Healthy Water website at:

www.nj.gov/dep/healthylawnshealthywater

