

A Conversation With Greenable Woodbridge - Conserving Water While Maintaining Our Lawns and Gardens

It's summer, which means we all enjoy having that lush green lawn - but it takes a lot of water to keep the grass green. It takes even more water if you have a home vegetable garden. However, there are still ways we can reduce the amount of water we use in maintaining our lawns and gardens.

The first thing you can do is make sure you only water your lawn and garden if it truly needs it - most water needs will be met simply by rainfall. Step on the grass in your lawn, and if it springs back when you lift your foot, it doesn't need water. For your garden, check the individual plants to see that they remain healthy - be mindful to consider if any wilting is from a lack of water or from an overgrown plant that needs to be trimmed back.

When you do water your lawn, do so in the cooler parts of the day. By doing your watering in the early morning, you cut back on how much will evaporate before reaching the soil and being wasted. Similarly, using a drip irrigation system instead of a sprinkler can reduce waste by evaporation. When using a sprinkler that shoots water droplets high into the air, it breaks apart in to smaller and smaller drops that sometimes evaporate before they even hit the ground. By using a drip system to water your lawn that stays closer to the ground helps to keep this from happening.

In your garden, make sure you choose to plant native species that are equipped to grow in our local conditions without too much extra assistance to cut down on water and fertilizer needs. Consider hooking up a rain barrel to your gutter system and use collected rain water to tend your garden.

You can also strive to save water while doing household chores around your yard. Do not keep a hose running when washing your car at home, use a bucket and only quickly hose down the car to rinse off at the end. Better yet, instead of washing your car at home, take it to a car wash that recycles its wash/rinse water. This not only saves water, but keeps from washing soapy water down the storm drains. To also save water, do not cut your grass too short. Longer grass retains water better than short grass, allowing you to water less frequently.

You may have noticed that, unlike last week, there aren't specific estimates here on how much water doing these things will save you. That's because, unlike inside the house, outside there is too much uncertainty in how much water you need to use and how you'll go about using it. The uncertainty of weather makes it not very useful to try and tell you how much you'll save, but keep these tips in mind in order to conserve what you can.

For more information check out these links from last week, which also include tips on conserving water outdoors:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/conserves.htm>

<http://www.middlesexwater.com/customer-care/water-conservation-tips>