

SMART ADVICE



6 Easy Ways to Save Water in the Garden

Kate Karam | March 23, 2017

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With dwindling resources, ongoing regional droughts, and growing demand, water conservation is everyone's concern. (Despite the the wet winter we've just had in many drought areas, it's wise to take a long term view!) These six tips will help you conserve precious water, save money on your water bill, and make your yard a healthier place... without losing your garden's beauty. (Here are some [how-to tips for watering](#).)



Add Lots of Compost to Your Soil

Turning 2 - 3 inches of store-bought or homemade compost into the top 4 - 6 inches of your soil at least twice a year (spring and fall, but again in mid-summer can't hurt!) is one of the best ways to reduce overall water use. Organic matter, such as compost, helps to improve soil structure, which in turn helps to retain precious moisture. [More here.](#)

Best of all, your plants will grow better, and suffer fewer pest and pathogen problems in healthy soil that's rich in organic matter.



Choose Non-Thirsty Plants...

...that don't skimp on the beauty.



Why wage a war with nature if you don't have to? Choose lovely plants that enjoy or even prefer, dry conditions. How to tell if a plant is H₂O thrifty? Look for plants with silver, furry, waxy, fleshy or glossy leaves. Often, those with aromatic foliage are tells that a plant will hold up well even when the faucet is turned off.

Here are [10 totally gorgeous shrubs](#) that sip rather than gulp water.



Keep Up with Weeds

Weeds zap valuable soil moisture from your plants. Grab a trowel or a hoe and show them no mercy. You can also control weeds by installing landscape fabric which is both water and air permeable. Readily available at garden centers, it's easy to use. Snip an X, pull back the fabric, plant, then top with mulch.



Make Pots a Priority

Mature trees, shrubs and lawns are surprisingly resilient, but containers have needs! Try these strategies: group pots together to benefit from shade created by one another's foliage; transplant rootbound specimens into larger pots; consider adding a handful of water-storing polymer crystals.



Install a Smart Watering System

Wireless "smart controllers" activate your automatic watering systems based on current weather data and information about the specifics of your garden.

Super easy—just install, download an app, and enter a bit of info. Works with sprinklers, drip kits, and soaker hoses, too.

Watering the lawn? Save even more water (as much as 500 gallons each year) by adjusting sprinklers to reduce overspray on sidewalks and patios and repairing damaged sprinklers immediately.



Mulch, Mulch, Mulch

First, it makes a garden look more finished, like the gardener was just there!



More important, mulch reduces evaporation. Water is making its way down into the soil to the plant's roots and you're watering less often—both of which make both you and your plants very happy.

Shredded bark or shredded leaves, gravel, straw, cocoa hulls—all good options. Lay it on thick!

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