



Is Your Yard Water Efficient?

*Design and Maintenance Techniques
To Promote Water Quality and Conservation*

Peak summer water use is placing demands on our water supply, and lawn and landscape practices are now under scrutiny in Holliston and surrounding communities. During drought the Town cannot pump enough water to meet these demands. Also, state agencies strictly limit the amount of water that every town is allowed to pump. Water bans have forced us to take a closer look at traditional landscape practices. The Town of Holliston is now encouraging residents to adopt water efficient landscaping techniques. Most of these techniques are easy to implement, have immediate positive economic benefits, and are based on common sense. We need your cooperation to protect our water resources.

Designing the Landscape with Water in Mind

- Reduce lawn area by adding trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. Excessively steep or wet areas may not be appropriate for lawn, especially if they are infrequently used. Decide where lawn is desirable, based on where people like to be and what they like to do.
- Create pleasant, protected spaces by planting trees and shrubs for privacy, shade and windbreaks. Reducing sun and wind exposure decreases water evaporation from lawns and improves energy efficiency for building heating and cooling.
- Minimize water waste. Think about water recycling and redirection. Collect water runoff from roofs in cisterns or rain barrels to water plants during times of drought and water restrictions. Redirect runoff to rain gardens and detention ponds to prevent stormwater from overloading sewers. Minimize pavement to allow water to penetrate the ground and replenish aquifers. Protect waterways from sedimentation and chemical pollution with buffer plantings to filter pollution.
- Protect waterways and natural features during construction. Although construction activities may not last long, erosion sedimentation, grading changes and compaction from earth moving can have lasting effects on water resources. Often this damage is costly or irreplaceable. It is best to plan for site protection before the damage is done.
- Choose low-maintenance natives plants well suited to your particular conditions. When established, native plants require minimal water, fertilizer, pesticide, or herbicide because they are adapted to this region. Native plants can be adapted to a wide range of styles. They provide a diversity of color and texture in all seasons, creating an attractive, functional landscape while protecting and improving our water supply.

Maintaining the Landscape with Water in Mind

- Enrich soil with compost to increase its water holding capacity.
- Plant in the spring or fall when rainfall is frequent. Plant grass seed in the fall when there is less weed seed competition. Mulch to increase the soil's ability to store and conserve water, cool the soil, reduce the weeds, and protect the soil from erosion.
- Mow lawns between 2.5 and 3" in height. Longer leaf blades mean longer and healthier roots. The frequency and height of lawn mowing can greatly affect water needs. Longer grass blades support deeper root systems and enhance drought resilience.
- Water less often. The greatest waste of water is too much too often. Deep infrequent watering results in deeper roots, which are more tolerant during drought. Most plants require only 1" of water per week. Lawns can survive extended dry periods without watering – they will turn brown, but will revive once the rain returns. If you must water, use rain sensors and adjust sprinklers according to soil type and sun exposure.
- Inspect water lines and hoses for leaks and repair promptly.
- Fertilize according to soil test results. If you must fertilize use organic slow-release fertilizer to protect water quality and build healthy soils.
- Avoid inadvertent pesticide use or high soluble nitrogen applications, which can quickly leach into and adversely affect our water resources. Nitrogen and phosphorus are two fertilizer elements that contribute to water pollution. Read labels prior to purchasing fertilizer.

Some Benefits of Water Efficient Landscaping

- Although the initial cost of converting to a water efficient landscape may be higher than seeding a lawn the overall cost over time is much lower.
- Protecting soil and plants during construction saves money on replacement and provides a more mature landscape in less time.
- Smaller lawns allow you to save money on mowing, watering, and chemical application. They also reduce the amount of dust, air pollution, and noise caused by lawnmowers.
- Using native plants improves regional character, adding charm and beauty to a neighborhood. The landscape may remain lusher and greener in times of drought because native plants are well adapted to local conditions. Greener landscapes and pleasant outdoor spaces invite people outdoors and help create a sense of community.

References and Additional Information for Water Conservation:

- The American Water Works Association www.awwa.org
- University of Massachusetts Extension www.UmassDroughtInfo.org
- Massachusetts Horticultural Society. www.masshort.org