

The 5 Best Ways to Save Water During The Summer

It has become the responsibility of individuals and families, as well as municipal governments, to embrace water conservation measures as part of our daily routine. While there are many actions we can take to reduce water use, here are five most effective and easy to adopt practices we can use to conserve water today.

1. Let your lawn go dormant

The best way to save water outdoors during a drought is to let your lawn go dormant. The lawn will turn brown during dormancy but it will regain its color once the rains return. Most healthy turf grasses can be left dormant for 3 – 4 weeks without the grass dying. If drought conditions last longer than 4 weeks, water should be applied to re-hydrate the grass enough to keep it alive. Water sufficiently to wet the soil down to 5 inches. This small amount of watering will not restore the grass to its natural green color but will keep it alive until the rains come.

If you're re-seeding bare spots or seeding a new lawn, be sure to use a drought-resistant grass seed. New varieties of grass seed, such as [Eco-Lawn](#), have been developed to thrive in drought conditions. Eco-Lawn is also low-maintenance and does not require fertilizers or frequent mowing.

2. Hand water your garden and shrub beds

Hand watering your garden and shrub beds saves up to 40% of the water used when compared to sprinklers, since sprinklers apply water across the entire swath they are set to cover. In a garden, the pathways take up much of the ground space, and do not need watering. And by not watering the pathways you won't need to weed them since the weeds will dry up and wither. Hand watering also delivers all the water right where it is needed, unlike the sprinkler which loses some water to wind and evaporation before it reaches the ground.



Watering squash plants beneath the leaf canopy, by hand. Note the straw mulch covering the soil.

Another benefit of hand watering a garden is that some vegetable crops, such as tomatoes, do better when their leaves are kept dry. Hand watering lets you direct the water beneath the leaves and this reduces water-borne fungal diseases on vulnerable crops. Watering your garden by hand also gives you time to observe the beds more closely and to see any weeds that need pulling, any pest-ridden foliage that should be plucked, or issues with the plants which may need attention. I enjoy hand watering my garden early in the morning as a peaceful meditation to begin the day.

An alternative to hand watering is to use [soaker hoses](#) or drip systems. These methods let you deliver water to specific areas, similar to hand watering. Soaker hoses and drip systems can also be put on timers which are

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easily installed on your hose spigot. Timers enable you to water your garden and shrubs while you are away from home.

3. Wash your car using a bucket for water

People understand that it's wasteful to wash cars on a regular basis, so driving around in a dusty car is socially commendable. When the car must be washed, fill a bucket with water and use a sponge to apply the water. Refill the bucket to rinse, again using the sponge to apply the water sparingly. A quarter cup of white vinegar can be added to the water to reduce streaks, and this solution does not need further rinsing.

4. Keep drinking water in a jug in the refrigerator

At home, we typically run the tap until the water runs cold every time we want a drink. By simply decanting tap water into a large container, or individual bottles, you can save as much as 50% of water used for personal drinking. Besides the obvious benefit of conserving water, keeping water in the refrigerator has two additional benefits – the water is cooler than it would be from the tap, and the practice of decanting water from the fridge helps families wean themselves of buying water in individual plastic bottles.

5. Apply mulch to plants, shrubs and ornamental trees

By covering the soil with mulch around the base of plants, the evaporation of water from the soil is greatly reduced. Plants can better survive a drought when mulched, and require less frequent watering. There are many different materials that can be used for mulch, but care should be taken to not use materials with weed seeds or materials which do not 'breathe', such as plastic sheeting. (Using plastic sheeting will solarize the soil, killing beneficial organisms in the top layers of soil.)



A layer of dried grass about 4" thick covers the soil beneath these bean plants.

Once you get used to using mulch you'll want to use this method regardless of drought conditions, since it's so easy to apply and reduces the need for regular watering. Mulch also suppresses weed growth which is another bonus.

To learn more about different mulch materials and their best applications, click here to view our [Mulch Chart](#).

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