

Careful planning can help you save water in gardens

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Gardens usually consume a large amount of water. Luckily, there are a lot of ways to reduce this consumption without sacrificing beauty and function. For optimal results, it is necessary to plan and design your garden for the appropriate vegetation. This includes a more efficient irrigation system that corresponds with your conservation goals.

Planning and design

Before planting your garden, it is a good idea to look carefully at your climate, soil, garden location and existing vegetation. This information is important to be able to choose plants that will grow the best with less water. It is very important to decide where will be the most suitable location for the garden, according to its natural conditions. For example, you probably wouldn't want to plant a thirsty shrub on top of a slope which doesn't receive water from your sprinkler system.

Once you choose a spot for your garden, separate the different garden sprinkler zones according to the amount of water that each group of plants will need. This way, you can avoid drowning some plants and wasting water in order to adequately water others.

A good way to zone your garden is by placing plant types that need the same amount of water in the same area, and adjusting the sprinklers accordingly. Also, using a drip irrigation system allows you to get the most amount of water to the plant, instead of losing water to evaporation.

Vegetation

The selection of suitable plants is an essential factor for the success of a water-saving garden. Consider the idea of maintaining the pre-existing vegetation and integrating it with your choice of Colorado native species. That way you can count on plants that adapt to the climate and ground conditions and need less watering.

It's a good idea to limit large areas of sod (grass), as it is the greatest consumer of water in a garden. As an alternative, plant shrubs, trees or use decorative mulch in your garden. Mulch uses organic and inorganic materials, like sand, stones, gravel or bark, to cover surfaces within the garden. Mulch helps to regulate the temperature of the ground, maintain moisture levels and limit weeds invading the garden.

Maintenance

To save water, you must water in an effective way. Water should be provided to plants only as necessary, according to their actual needs. Establish the right time, frequency and amount of irrigation needed to avoid over watering.

Here are some simple maintenance tips that can help you maintain your garden in a water-saving manner:

- Remove weeds. They use the water meant for the plants you intended to grow.
- Water your garden early in the morning or in the evening, to reduce water lost to evaporation.
- Use a broom or a leaf blower to clean walkways instead of a hose.

By using a little garden pre-planning and maintenance, you can enjoy the bounty of your gardens all summer and reduce water use.

We live in a semiarid climate where droughts will always be a part of our environment. Water for our future means conserving now. The Drought Response Information Project (DRIP) is a collaboration between the valley's domestic water utilities and CSU Cooperative Extension to provide information and educate the public about drought and the importance of water conservation.

