

Late summer a good time to start watering less often
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The intelligent use of water is important to all of us on the DRIP team. Even though we have a great deal of water coursing through the Grand Valley, how we use it determines our success in maintaining our trees, shrubs, turf areas and flower beds. The way we use water also directly affects the health of streams and rivers, and the plants and animals that live in and around those water sources.

As the weather gets cooler, plants need less water. During these cooler months we need to reduce the amount of water we use or water less often in our gardens and landscaped areas. Trees and shrubs start the process of acclimating for winter in late summer and early fall. This actually requires a shift in the plant's metabolism, which protects it from freeze damage. If some trees and shrubs are over-watered during late summer and fall, they may not undergo this change in metabolism. For many types of shrubs, reducing often and how much you water now is prudent. Your lawn should also be placed on a water diet.

Trees, shrubs, lawns and perennial vegetable and flower gardens will still need sufficient water to penetrate below their root systems - just water less frequently. Start by stretching the time between each watering. By the end of October, your lawn should be watered no more than once every other week. Your trees and shrubs, unless they were planted in late-summer or this fall, will get by with only one watering in October.

All of your plants will require a soaking just before the water is turned out of the ditch (early November for homeowners who use treated water). A deep watering at that time will help carry the plants through until next spring. If the soil dries out excessively during the winter your plants will be more susceptible to drought next summer.

Lawns should be fertilized when the last summer watering takes place. Apply a quick-release fertilizer, such as ammonium sulfate. This will result in more roots and deeper roots developing this fall, which helps create a healthier, more drought-resistant lawn next year.

Don't forget to have your irrigation system winterized. Replacing broken sprinkler pipes, heads and valves each spring is easily avoided by "blowing out" the system at the proper time in early winter. More information on preparing for winter is available at <http://WesternSlopeGardening.org> or by calling 244-1836.