

Waterwise Landscaping

Creating a waterwise landscape can provide dramatic water savings for your household.

But you can practice waterwise landscaping even if you don't change any of the plants in your landscape.

By developing good water-use habits, you can make each drop count, and you'll use less water to maintain a healthy, beautiful landscape.



Seven Principles of Waterwise Landscape Design

- 1. Plan.** Group plants with similar needs together. Use the drainage patterns and sun exposure in your landscape to your advantage.
- 2. Build healthy soil.** Soils with a proper balance of organic and mineral matter need less water and fertilizer. Find out what kinds of soils you have. Add compost if needed and loosen compacted soil.
- 3. Use turf effectively.** Use turf only in high-use areas, and consider planting drought-tolerant varieties.
- 4. Irrigate efficiently.** Base schedule on soil moisture and plant requirements. Base irrigation system on water-use zones, and keep it in working order.
- 5. Use water-thrifty plants.** Choose plants adapted to the conditions in your landscape; they will need little extra water and care once established.
- 6. Mulch.** Apply 3–4 inches of organic or rock mulch to suppress weeds and minimize evaporation. Replenish annually.
- 7. Maintain.** Weeding, mulching, pruning, and other maintenance all maximize the health of any landscape.

Why Save Water?

Pocatello and Chubbuck get all of their drinking water by pumping groundwater from the Lower Portneuf Valley Aquifer.

Rain and snowmelt take a long time to sink deep enough to recharge the aquifer, so the amount of water available to pump out is limited. The Lower Portneuf Valley Aquifer can supply about 7.6 billion gallons of water annually. In years of average rainfall, we use almost all of that.

In summer, the Pocatello Water Department pumps four times more water than in winter—**over 30 million gallons per day**. Most of this extra water is used on our landscapes.

We can't increase how much water the aquifer can hold, but we can make the most of the water we do have with good water-use habits.

Many of our landscapes are *overwatered* and can do very well with less water.

By using the tips in this brochure, you can significantly improve the effectiveness of your watering—which will result in a healthier landscape grown with less water.

For more information about conserving water, see <http://www.co.bannock.id.us/groundwater/>

Know how much water you are putting on your landscape

- Measure water applied in a typical run-time by placing small empty cans among sprinklers. Use this measurement and the irrigation schedules (see inside) to calculate how long to water each zone.
- Adjust run-time to apply the appropriate amount of water to turf and plants.
- Water new trees and shrubs with soaker hoses placed at the outside edge of the tree crown. Soil should be moist 8 to 10 inches deep. New trees and shrubs need 3 to 5 gallons of water each week.

Water effectively

- Push a long screwdriver into the ground. If it goes in easily, you don't need to water.
- Water less in cool months.
- Water early in the morning or at night.
- Avoid watering on windy or rainy days.
- Water deeply and less often.
- Aerate your lawn.
- Maintain sprinkler systems. Adjust spray heads so they don't spray onto sidewalks or driveway.
- Cut grass no shorter than 3 inches. Shorter grass needs more water.
- Use a mulching mower to keep nutrients in the yard and build organic matter in the soil.

Plants & Irrigation Schedules for Different Water-Use Zones

Different plants have different water, sun, and soil requirements. Placing plants with similar requirements together minimizes the work needed to keep them all healthy. Below are examples of plants suitable for different water zones and an irrigation schedule for each zone.

PLANTS FOR HIGH-WATER ZONES

Groundcovers

Bergenia Carex, hardy spp.
Corydalis Creeping Jenny

Perennials & Grasses

Bleeding Heart Bluegrass
Columbine Coral Bells
Delphinium Ferns
Hosta Lady's Mantle
Miscanthus spp. Perennial Rye

Shrubs

Arborvitae Cranberry Viburnum
Elderberry Euonymus
Hydrangea Pussy Willow
Spiraea Tea Roses
Weigela Yellow Twig Dogwood

Trees

Alders Birches
Engelmann Spruce Mountain Ash
Poplars Quaking Aspen
Willows Yellow Buckeye

High-Water Zone Irrigation Schedule

Plants in this zone need about 23 inches more water than rainfall provides.

- mid April to mid June, 1/2–3/4 inch per week
- mid June to mid Sept., 1–1 1/4 inch per week
- mid Sept. to mid Oct., 3/4 inch per week

PLANTS FOR MEDIUM-WATER ZONES

Groundcovers

Ajuga Periwinkle
Spotted Dead Nettle Sweet Woodruff

Perennials & Grasses

Aster Campanula
Black-Eyed Susan Daylily
Dianthus Geranium
Hollyhock Purple Coneflower
Scabiosa Shasta Daisy
Switchgrass Tall Fescue

Shrubs

Boxwood Butterfly Bush
Floribunda Rose Forsythia
Lilacs Littleleaf Mockorange
Mohican Viburnum Oregon Grape
Potentilla Red-Osier Dogwood
Rugosa Rose Snowberry

Trees

Colorado Spruce Eastern Redbud
English Oak Hawthorns
Honeylocust Horsechestnut
Kentucky Coffeetree Lindens
London Planetree Norway Maple
Rocky Mtn. Maple Sargent Cherry

Medium-Water Zone Irrigation Schedule

Plants in this zone need about 15–16 inches more water than rainfall provides.

- early May to early Oct., 3/4 inch per week

PLANTS FOR LOW-WATER ZONES

Groundcovers

Sedums Snow-in-Summer
Thyme spp. Veronica

Perennials & Grasses

Basin Wild Rye Bearded Iris
Blue Avena Grass Blue Grama
Buffalo Grass 'Covar' Sheep Fescue
Idaho Fescue Candytuft
Flax Gaillardia
Lambs Ears Lavender
Penstemon, hardy spp. Prairie Coneflower
Russian Sage Salvia, hardy spp.
'Sodar' Wheatgrass Yarrow

Shrubs

Caryopteris Cotoneasters
Golden Currant Junipers
Mountain Mahogany Nanking Cherry
Ninebark Serviceberry
Sumacs Yucca

Trees

Bigtooth Maple Bristlecone Pine
Bur Oak Gambel Oak
Hackberry Limber Pine
Pinyon Pines Ponderosa Pine

Low-Water Zone Irrigation Schedule

Plants in this zone need about 7–8 inches more water than rainfall provides.

- June 1 to Sept. 30, 1/2 inch per week

Water-Conserving Lawn Options

Some of our best turf options are warm-season grasses. These do most of their growing in summer and will be green only from June to September. Cool-season grasses do most of their growing in spring and fall.

Blue Grama, a truly drought-tolerant warm-season grass, needs only occasional irrigation. Its leaves are light green or gray-green.

Buffalo Grass, a warm-season grass, is one of the most drought-tolerant species available for use in lawns. It has fine-textured blue-green leaves and makes a soft, dense turf.

Kentucky Bluegrass, a cool-season grass, is available in quite drought-tolerant, vigorous cultivars. These can be watered less—once every 5 to 6 days in mid-summer.

Sheep Fescue, a quite drought-tolerant grass, goes dormant if stressed and is less refined looking than some other grasses. It is among the best cool-season, water-conserving grasses for our area.

Tall Fescue, a cool-season grass, has dark green leaves. Its deep roots mean it can be watered less often but deeply. Choose one of the newer fine-bladed cultivars, and plant thickly for best look.

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For more detailed information, see http://www.pocatello.us/se/se_landscaping