



GreenTip
How Do You Measure Up?



Saving Water Outdoors

For three of the last four years Guilford County has had a deficit of precipitation, now totaling over 18 inches. Even for the short period so far in 2009, rainfall is down. Before the start of springtime activities, we must be conscious of conserving water as one of our most valuable resources. The tip this week comes from the Guilford County Watershed Bulletin on "Groundwater and Water Conservation."

Saving Water Outdoors

- 1.** Don't overwater your lawn - no more than once a week in the winter or twice a week in the summer. A good rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks. Buy a rain gauge. Most of the year, lawns only need one inch of water per week.
- 2.** Water lawns during the early morning hours when temperatures and wind speed are the lowest. This reduces evaporation and waste.
- 3.** Position sprinklers carefully so water lands on the lawn and shrubs and not on paved areas.
- 4.** Install irrigation devices that are the most water efficient for each use. Micro and drip irrigation and soaker hoses are examples of efficient devices.
- 5.** Raise the lawn mower blade to at least three inches, or to its highest level. A higher cut encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system and holds soil moisture.
- 6.** Avoid over fertilizing your lawn. Applying fertilizer increases the need for water. Use fertilizers that contain slow-release, water-insoluble forms of nitrogen.
- 7.** Use mulch to retain moisture in the soil. (Help preserve native cypress forests by selecting other types of mulch such as treated melaleuca.) Mulch also helps control weeds that compete with landscape plants for water.
- 8.** Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees. Once established, they do not need water as frequently and usually will survive a dry period without watering. They also require less fertilizer or herbicides. Group plants together based on similar water needs.
- 9.** Use a broom or blower instead of a hose to clean leaves and other debris from your driveway or sidewalk and save 80 gallons of water every time.
- 10.** Use a shut-off nozzle on your hose which can be adjusted down to a fine spray, so that water flows only as needed. When finished, turn it off at the faucet instead of at the nozzle, to avoid leaks. Check hose connectors to make sure plastic or rubber washers are in place. Washers prevent leaks.
- 11.** Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours. Use a bell timer to remind yourself to turn sprinklers off.
- 12.** Use porous materials for walkways and patios to keep water in your yard and prevent wasteful runoff.
- 13.** Remember to weed your lawn and garden regularly. Weeds compete with other plants for nutrients, light, and water.
- 14.** Install a rain barrel to collect water from gutters and downspouts and use this water for window boxes, potted plants, flower beds and gardens.
- 15.** Aerate your lawn. Punch holes in your lawn about six inches apart so water will reach the roots rather than run off the surface.



**When it comes to taking care of our environment....
How do you MEASURE UP?**