

How to Be Water-Wise & Conserve

With the drought months upon us, it's particularly important to make your use of water outdoors most efficient, especially if you live in a region where restrictions on water use are in place. Following are some basic principles of water-wise landscaping that could prove helpful in the care of your garden and plants. • Look for plants that are well-suited to regional and local conditions.

- Group plants thoughtfully, selecting trees, shrubs, ground covers, perennials and annuals that naturally grow together and use about the same amount of water.
- Use water wisely and water plants only when needed, rather than by the clock or calendar. Also, water at night, when evaporation is much lower and air is calmer, and avoid runoff and overspray.
- Routinely cultivate your soil, incorporating organic matter such as compost, as this improves the soil's ability to resist evaporation and retain moisture.
- Use mulch to help even out temperature extremes – keeping soil cool on hot days and warm on cool days. Mulch also prevents soil from crusting, allowing better water penetration.
- Plant trees, choosing fire-resistant varieties and spacing them carefully within the landscape, because they help to lower air and soil temperatures, reducing plant and soil moisture loss.

Source: Firewise Communities How-To Newsletter, Summer 2007, www.firewise.org (These tips are adapted from the web site www.bewaterwise.com.)

The national Firewise Communities program is an interagency program designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire. The Firewise Communities program is sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Emergency Management Association, the US Fire administration, the National Association of State Fire Marshals, the National Fire Protection Association, and state forestry organizations.