

Water Conservation Update



Water Resources Association of San Benito County



May 2013
Water
Awareness
Month

Call the WRA and
ask for a FREE
Home Water
Survey.

The survey includes:

√Irrigation check

√Suggested
watering schedule

√Leak check

√High-quality hose
nozzle

√Showerheads and
faucet aerators
installed

√Water softener
assistance

Help our
community save
water while saving
money on your
water bill!



Peak Irrigation Season Begins!

In San Benito County, the largest use of residential water is watering landscapes. When a landscape or irrigation system is poorly designed or poorly maintained, or the landscape consists of plants not suited to the dry and often hot local climate, water demand increases as a result of excessive evaporation, leaks, and runoff. Water consumption can be greatly reduced with careful planning, good plant selection, efficient irrigation systems, and good water management and maintenance practices.

Since California experiences frequent and sometimes prolonged droughts together with an ever increasing demand, there is a great need for us to use water efficiently. But this doesn't mean we have to give up our gardens. We can use water more efficiently and still have colorful, esthetically pleasing landscapes—including some turf areas for recreation.

WATER USE EFFICIENCY IDEAS-RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPES

Planning Ahead

Planning is the key to a successful water wise landscape. It is very tempting to go to a garden center and buy plants because they catch your eye, but not knowing where to place them and how much water they need are the beginnings of an unnecessarily high water using landscape. By planning ahead, costly mistakes can be avoided.

First off, contact the Water Resources Association of San Benito County (WRASBC) for a free Home Water Survey. We check your house for leaks, inspect your irrigation system, make adjustments if needed, provide recommendations and develop a irrigation schedule for you to follow. We also offer landscaping classes in late winter and early spring. Go by the Water Wise Demonstration Garden at Dunne Park (corner of 6th and Powell). This is where you can witness a water efficient garden in person, see how attractive they can be, and get ideas for your own site.

Getting Started

Measure the landscape and draw the area and any existing landscape features to scale. This will give you an idea of the numbers of plants you will need, the size of the lawn and how much irrigation pipe, sprinkler heads, and mulch you will need to buy.

The WRASBC has free water efficient landscape plans on their website under the "Programs" link.

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Water Efficient Landscape Hardware Rebate

The WRASBC is offering a 50% rebate (up to \$100) for the purchase and installation of the following landscape irrigation hardware devices:

Hose timers: Ideal for use with a drip irrigation system, soaker hoses and hose end sprinklers, a hose timer will shut off your sprinklers after a preset duration to conserve water and prevent overwatering. Just turn on your water spigot and set the timer.

Rain sensors: A rain sensor is an irrigation shutoff device that prevents an automatic irrigation sprinkler system from turning on during and after a rain storm. These devices override a scheduled irrigation when a water collection cup or sensor on the shutoff device detects water.

MP Rotator nozzles: This is the perfect sprinkler for situations dealing with odd shaped areas or heavy soil conditions, like our local clay soils, that cause water run-off with normal pop-up sprinklers. MP Rotator sprinklers provide even watering to the lawn or garden area more slowly to allow water to be absorbed.

**Special rules apply—Call for more details:
637-4378**

FREE Toilets

Replacement program for homeowners with high-consumption toilets older than 1992.

Call or visit the WRA Website for details.



Water Softener Replacement Program

**\$150 - \$300 TO
GET THE SALT OUT!**



Rebates are available for customers of the City of Hollister, the City of San Juan Bautista, Sunnyslope County Water District and the San Benito County Water District (Zone 6) who already own a currently working water softener installed prior to 1999. The rebate for upgrading to a new, Demand Initiated Regeneration (DIR) water softener is \$150, converting to an offsite water softening service is \$250 and for demolishing a pre-1999 water softener with **NO** replacement the rebate is \$300 (special rules apply).

Help reduce the salt load to our sewer system and groundwater supply!

**MORE REBATES & FORMS AVAILABLE AT:
www.wrasbc.org**

(Go to "Programs" Link Top Left Hand Corner of Home Page)

Let there be work, bread, and water for all — Nelson Mandela

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Consider the size, sun exposure, and slope of the area to be landscaped. Avoid lawns on slopes that are difficult to mow and water. If possible, reduce slopes in the landscape that encourage runoff and waste water.

Think about who will use the landscape and how they will use it. These factors determine the type of plants required and how it will be maintained. Don't forget the need for shade and privacy screening.

When drawing the actual planting plan, avoid the temptation to place too many plants for the area. A crowded garden will use more water, cost more, be prone to diseases, and require more maintenance.

Consult books such as *Sunset Western Landscaping Book* about garden design. Many books available are very good for useful advice and ideas. The WRASBC has a reference library of these books that customers can borrow.

How much grass do you need?

Lawns use more water than any other part of a landscape and they cover large amounts of acreage statewide. Oftentimes lawns are installed because an alternative was never considered. There are alternatives to lawns, so in the planning stage decide if lawn is really a requirement in your yard. Think of who will use it and how often, who will mow it, fertilize it, remove the thatch, etc.

Perhaps a lawn is not needed at all. If a grass area is really just space filler, consider alternatives such as hardscapes, rock gardens or an low-water consuming groundcover.

This is especially important on areas with slopes that tend to shed water faster than it can soak in. Water draining into street gutters and storm drains often discharges directly into streams and this runoff from landscapes frequently contains fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants.

If you choose to plant a turf area after considering these factors, minimize the size of the lawn and choose a grass type that doesn't require lots of water and fertilizer.

Good choices make good landscapes

Once a decision regarding the turf area has been made, choose trees and large shrubs next. Make these choices carefully, they are the "backbone" of any landscape and poor choices will result in high water use, poor performance, and frequently costly maintenance or removal.

When selecting trees and large shrubs, choose varieties that will still fit into your yard when they mature. Learn what your climate zone is and buy plants that are suited to it. Choose deciduous trees for shade and evergreen trees for screening.

*Representing the City of Hollister,
the City of San Juan Bautista,
Sunnyslope County Water District,
and the San Benito County Water
District.*

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