

What is a Waterwise Landscape?



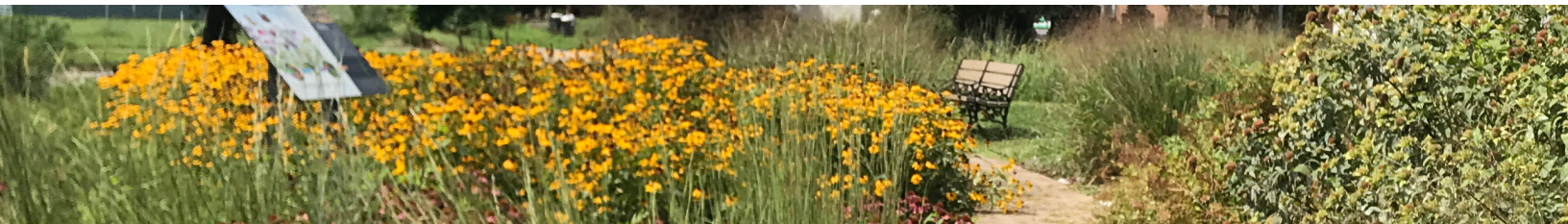
NEBRASKA STATEWIDE

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Waterwise Landscapes: at Home

Water is essential. ALL life depends on it. In the US, we average 550 gallons a day per home and in urban areas up to 75% of that goes toward irrigating our lawns. We can design our landscapes to use less water as well as collect and purify it before returning it to the ground (instead of sending it to the storm drain). Here are some simple steps you can take today to make your yard a Waterwise Landscape that helps protect Nebraska's water resources. When you're ready, here are some larger steps you can take to make your yard even more of a water guardian.



First Steps to a Waterwise Landscape

1. Turn off the timer and take an active roll in irrigation. Treat sprinklers as a backup in times of drought rather than the main source of water for your lawn. Water deep and less often to encourage root growth.
2. Accept some mid-summer dormancy in your lawn. This is how grass protects itself from the heat and dry weather. Water enough to keep it alive but don't push it to stay dark green, it will perk up in the fall! This also helps keep weeds down.
3. Mow high and less often. Mowing causes extra stress; the grass needs water to seal the cut and grow again. Mowing a little less often and no shorter than 3.5" helps keep grass healthy, uses less water and keeps out weeds.
4. Use soaker hoses instead of sprinklers in your vegetable and flower gardens. Soaker hoses put the water right where the plant wants it, at the roots. This means more water going into the ground instead of evaporating. Watering at the soil also helps decrease leaf diseases meaning more produce!
5. Water early in the morning when plants are using the most water. Plants wake up ready to use that water to it's full advantage. They slow down in the afternoon heat and take in even less water over night. Watering before it gets hot also decreases the amount of water lost to evaporation.
6. Keep your soil covered in plants or mulch. Open soil loses water to evaporation very quickly. 2-3" of wood chip mulch helps trap water in the soil and provide protection from the hot sun (and weeds). Living mulch uses smaller plants between larger ones to keep the soil covered and protected.

Next Steps: Planning for Larger Projects

Begin with the 6 First Steps, sustainability always starts with using your current resources wisely. When you're ready, plan ahead for these larger projects to make an even bigger impact on your water use.



Aim the rain:

Use downspouts to your advantage with rainbarrels or simply pointing downspouts into garden areas to make the best use of runoff. Create areas for rain to leave the pavement and direct it into planted areas rather than stormdrains.



Replace Turf:

Use drought tolerant species like buffalo grass or tall fescue. Consider non-turf plants like clover, sedges and sedums where foot traffic is lower. Avoid planting turf grass in shady areas where it struggles, use sedges for lush meadows under trees.



Limit Lawn:

Choose an area of your yard to keep as lawn, maybe a stretch in the front or part of the backyard where kids and dogs play. Slowly convert the rest to gardens of low water use, native and well-adapted plants. Look for space to include a rain garden or bioswale to help capture rainwater.



Replace pavement:

Impervious surfaces like cement (and even compacted turf grass) can be replaced with permeable pavers, brick or even converting excess pavement to planted areas.