

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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Board Members, Community Managers, Developers,
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NEWS



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Things to Do If You Don't Overseed

Many homeowners, communities and businesses will soon be making decisions about overseeding their turf areas with winter rye. As our statewide drought continues, it is vitally important to conserve our water resources. Besides the cost savings in water, seed and labor, communities can use the resources their landscaper would ordinarily spend on mowing winter rye to do the following:

1. Irrigation schedules Adjust irrigation schedules for the season. At a minimum, irrigation systems should be adjusted quarterly according to the season. Ideally this should be done monthly for best management practices.

Dormant Bermuda only requires irrigation once per month in the winter. In the winter, trees should be watered to a depth of three feet once every 4 weeks. Shrubs only need to be watered once every 30 days as long as the water is soaking in to two feet.



Call your city's Water Conservation Office for your free copy of "**Landscape Watering by the Numbers**" which will walk you, step by step, through programming your irrigation system.

2. Irrigation systems Winter is a great time for irrigation maintenance. A broken sprinkler head can waste up to 20 gallons of water a minute! Check sprinkler heads and drip emitters. Replace broken sprinkler heads with the same brand and type. Emitters can become clogged with salts or sediment and may need to be replaced. As plants grow and mature, their water needs increase requiring the addition of more emitters or ones that dispense more water.

3. Emitters Move emitters away from plant trunks. Typically the emitters are in the same place they were when the landscape was originally installed. Moving emitters encourages the roots to grow outward creating a better anchoring system for the plant. Plus, the feeder roots which absorb water and nutrients are located away from the trunk at or near the drip line. Moving emitters to the drip line allows the soil near the trunk to dry a bit. Dry soil is much more stable than wet soil and this can prevent plants (especially trees) from blowing over in winds.

4. Stakes and ties Check the ties and stakes on trees. Ties that are too tight can create wounds or weak

points along the trunk. They must be checked on a regular basis to prevent restriction of the trunk's movement. Allowing your trees to move slightly in the wind, within the tie, will help to develop a strong trunk. Trees should never be permanently staked. Remove stakes if trees can stand on their own. Stakes and ties should be removed as soon as possible, usually within one year.

5. Weeds Apply pre or post-emergent herbicides. Fall is a great time to get control of spring weeds by applying a pre-emergent herbicide that prevents weed seeds from being able to sprout. Post-emergent herbicides can work for weeds that have already germinated and are growing; look for the active ingredient "glyphosate".

6. Pruning Winter is a good time to prune some landscape shrubs. Instead of continual shear pruning, an annual selective pruning will produce a more natural-looking plant and allow it to bloom to its full potential. Plants that are repeatedly shear pruned require *more* water and fertilizer. Maintenance costs for landscapes that are selectively pruned may be reduced as much as twenty five percent.

Summer-blooming shrubs are best pruned in the winter or early spring and include Texas sage (*Leucophyllum* spp.), Red Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*), Damianita (*Chrysactinia mexicana*), our native bunch grasses (*Muhlenbergia* spp.), Desert Ruellia (*Ruellia peninsularis*), most Salvias, and Arizona Yellow Bells (*Tecoma* sp.).

Frosty nights may damage tender foliage on plants like lantana and bougainvillea. Wait until new growth has emerged next February or March before you prune away frost-damaged stems. The 'toasted' parts actually help insulate the rest of the plant from further damage. Selective pruning with hand pruners or by-pass loppers may be more work, but the results are worth it. Check with your local Cooperative Extension office for additional resources on pruning.

7. Replace annual color beds with perennial desert-adapted plants Color beds are typically replanted twice each year. Perennial beds only need to be planted once and can provide year-round color with less maintenance. Penstemons (*Penstemon* sp.), Angelita

Daisy (*Hymenoxys acaulis*), Katie Ruellia (*Ruellia brittoniana* 'Katie'), Desert Marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), Tufted Evening Primrose (*Oenothera caespitosa*), Mexican Honeysuckle (*Justicia spicigera*), Goodding's Verbena (*Verbena gooddingii*), Desert Zinnia (*Zinnia acerosa*), Gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri*), Bulbine (*Bulbine frutescens*), Aloes (*Aloe* sp.), Chocolate Flower (*Berlandiera lyrata*), Hummingbird Trumpet (*Zauschneria californica*) and Fleabane Daisy (*Erigeron divergens*) are just a few choices.

8. Mulch around plants Adding a layer of organic mulch will improve your soil by adding nutrients and slowing moisture loss over your plants' root zone. They also keep tender roots warmer during the chilly winter months and cooler in the summer. Keep mulch away from trunks or main stems to avoid suffocation. Organic mulches such as shredded bark or compost need to be added annually as they decompose rapidly each year. Organic mulches can be covered with granite if you prefer. By using trimmings from the landscape as mulch, you are saving on dumping fees and keeping green waste out of the landfill.

9. Planting Fall is the perfect time to plant new areas, replace plants that have died or remove high water use plants. Native or desert-adapted plants adjust easily to our soils and climate, and require less water and maintenance. Planting in the fall gives roots a chance to establish in the cool months before the hot summer temperatures hit. Plants should be placed in holes no deeper than the root ball. The soil should be loosened two to four times the size of the canopy. Placing a 2-3 inch layer of mulch around the plant, but away from the stems or trunk, will help those roots thrive. Contact your Water Conservation Office for a free copy of the new booklet, **Landscape Plants for the Arizona Desert** which features over 200 colorful desert adapted plants.

Submitted by the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association with permission from Catherine Rymer, Water Conservation Specialist, Town of Gilbert, AZ

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Watering Tips

July - August

The monsoon season is upon us. When storms and high humidity are present, landscape plants will use less water. Adjust your controller/timer by stretching out the number of days between watering cycles.

Deep and infrequent watering is best for established plants. Infrequent watering allows the soil to dry providing oxygen to the roots. This promotes deep-rooted, healthy plants. How much to water depends on the root system of the plant being watered. A good rule of thumb is to water long enough that soil moisture penetrates two to three feet deep for trees and large shrubs, one to two feet for small shrubs and large groundcovers, and one foot deep for small plants and cacti. Turf grass requires only eight inches of moisture. Soil moisture can be tested with a long screwdriver or a soil probe.

Additional watering tips for the monsoon season include the following:

- Water in the early morning to keep evaporation low.
- In timers equipped with back-up batteries install new batteries to handle the occasional power outage that may occur during storms.
- Shut irrigation off in rainy weather. If we receive one-half an inch or more of rainfall, you can skip an irrigation cycle.

You can request the brochure, *Landscape Watering by the Numbers*, by contacting your city's water conservation office www.amwua.org.

*Submitted by the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association
With permission from Bill Casenhiser
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