

Prepare your yard for the monsoon season to prevent damage and water waste

The monsoon season has officially begun. While everyone knows the precautions to ensure they remain safe during the storm season, it is also important to prepare your yard to limit the damage and amount of water that can get wasted.

Extreme weather can wreak havoc on your plants and overall landscape, whether it is intense heat or the heavy rains and winds that accompany monsoons. But with the proper care, your plants can continue to thrive during this severe heat and be protected from unwanted damage from winds and rain.



Prune your trees less. This is the most important part of keeping your trees healthy enough to withstand a storm. The less you prune a tree, the stronger it will grow; that's why selecting the right-sized tree for a suitable space is important. Leave lower branches on a young tree. Those little branches feed lower sections of the tree and give a mature tree heft on the bottom. Don't "thin" a tree by removing all the greenery in the middle and leaving foliage only on the outer ends of branches. This mistake is called "lion tailing." During a high wind, these branches will bend at a weak spot and be more likely to snap off. You can learn more about pruning a tree [here](#).

Support your trees. Swaying in the wind can help young trees grow stronger, but the wind also can uproot them if they are not staked properly. To [properly stake a tree](#), use two stakes six inches from the trunk and gently attach them to the trunk with looped ties that allow the tree to sway in the wind. Allowing the tree to move with the wind creates a dense wood and strong trunk that will help keep mature trees standing despite the weather.

Check your irrigation system. Many homeowners trust their yard to an automated irrigation controller. Electrical storms can get your irrigation timer off schedule, set your controller back to a default schedule, or even cause irreparable damage. While the controller may be reliable, your pipes, sprinkler heads, and drip lines are less so. Drip lines are particularly susceptible to weather. High temperatures, dust, and rain can clog, crack and break emitters and lines, so each time that reliable controller comes on, plants don't get watered, or gallons of wasted water pools in your yard. Pooling water gives mosquitoes a place to breed and wastes your money and precious water. Check sprinkler heads for damage. Grass and leaves also can clog sprinkler heads. If you leave for part or most of the summer, make sure a neighbor, friend, family member, or gardener regularly

walks your yard while the irrigation system is running and is prepared to spot and stop any leaks. AMWUA's [Smart Home Water Guide](#) can help.

Utilize the rainwater. If it rained about a half-inch in your neighborhood, you should turn off your watering system. That saves you money on your water bill and saves water for all of us. Better yet, you also can contour your yard to help your plants and trees get the most out of each storm. Sunken gardens and deep wells around your trees help slow, spread, and sink rainwater instead of allowing it to run off your property. It's the simplest [rain harvesting technique](#) and takes nothing more than a shovel, a little energy, and thoughtful placement of plants. Consider this - one inch of rain on a 1,000 square-foot roof produces 600 gallons of runoff. In the Valley, we typically receive an average of seven inches of rain a year.

Now that you know some simple tips to prepare your yard for the storm season, it is also important to remember that the high winds that accompany a monsoon are powerful and can cause additional damage to your yard. Items such as patio furniture can become airborne, damage your existing landscape, and, even worse, fly into a neighbor's yard. So, before a storm, move lawn cushions, umbrellas, and light furniture into the house or garage to avoid unwanted damage.

There is still time to prepare before the monsoon season gets overly active, so make sure you do. Ultimately, it will give you peace of mind and protect your yard. That way, you can sit back and enjoy the rain and cooler evenings that the monsoon season brings.

For over 50 years, Arizona Municipal Water Users Association has worked to protect our member cities' ability to provide assured, safe, sustainable water supplies to their communities. For more water information, visit www.amwua.org.