

## Properly prep your yard for the new monsoon season to minimize damage

Another monsoon season has officially begun. Now, as we wait in anticipation of what we hope is significant rainfall, we need to take the necessary precautions to remain safe when those storms come our way. Preparing your yard to be monsoon ready is also essential to minimize damage. After all, we want to ensure all the hard work you have put into your private oasis is not washed away.

Here are some tips to help you protect your yard this monsoon season:



**Prune your trees less.** This is critical to keeping your trees healthy enough to withstand a storm. The less you prune a tree, the stronger it will grow, so 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. These branches will bend at a weak spot during high wind and be more likely to snap off. 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." 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 yards to an automated irrigation controller. However, 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. 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. Check sprinkler heads for damage. Grass and leaves also can clog sprinkler heads. Pooling water gives mosquitoes a place to breed and wastes your money and everyone's water. If you leave for part or most of the summer, ensure a neighbor, friend, family member, or gardener regularly walks your yard while the irrigation system runs and is prepared to spot and stop leaks. AMWUA's [Smart Home Water Guide](#) can help.

**Utilize the rainwater.** If it rained about a half-inch in your neighborhood, you could 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 letting it 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 annually.

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. In addition, items such as patio furniture can become airborne and not only damage your existing landscape but, even worse, could end up flying 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 and protect your yard before the storms hit, so make sure you do. That way, you can enjoy the rain and the cooler evenings that the monsoon season typically brings without any worries.

*For over 50 years, Arizona Municipal Water Users Association has worked to protect our member cities' ability to provide assured, safe, and sustainable water supplies to their communities. For more water information, visit [www.amwua.org](http://www.amwua.org).*