

## Fall is the Prime Time to Plan, Prep, and Plant

It may be hard to believe, but fall is officially upon us. That means daytime temperatures are lowering, the nights are cooling off, and most of us are relieved to open the windows, turn down the air conditioner, and venture outside to enjoy the fresh air. It is also the perfect time to inspect how our yards fared through the record-breaking summer heat and create a to-do list for the cooler weather.

The possibilities for creating a beautiful, easy-to-care-for landscape that thrives in our environment while using less water are endless, and the time to get started is now.



### Proper planning is a must

A picturesque yard begins with a great plan. When designing your landscape and developing your unique plan, it's important to consider your preferences and purposes, such as:

- The look you want to achieve
- How you will use your yard
- The amount of time you want to spend taking care of your yard
- Your budget

Developing your unique plan is vital because it will incorporate what you like into all phases of planning and building your yard.

### Pick the right plants

The desert offers a diverse selection of low-water-use, highly drought-tolerant trees and shrubs. Still, figuring out how to utilize these plants to their full potential can be intimidating. To assist you with selecting the perfect plants for your yard, we have the ideal interactive resource for homeowners, businesses, and anyone looking for a little extra desert-adapted flower power with the Plants for the Arizona Desert website. This searchable site will help take the guesswork out of finding the most suitable shrubs and trees for your yard. Also, fall is the right time to sow wildflower seeds to ensure they bloom in the spring.

### Why plant in the fall?

Whether you are looking to update your landscape with more water-efficient plants or need to replace those that suffered at the hands of the summer's extreme heat, the fall planting season is ideal. Beginning in late September through early December is a great time to transform your yard for many reasons:

- Soil temperatures are still warm, which encourages root growth and development.

- Plants have time to get properly established in their new surroundings before dealing with desert heat in the summer.
- Plants require less water with cooler temperatures and without the relentless summer sun.

### **Don't forget about watering**

Water is a precious resource, especially here in the desert. Being water-wise is a year-round responsibility, so now that temperatures are cooling, it's an ideal time to take stock of how water-efficient your yard is.

- Proper plant selection and appropriate irrigation can significantly reduce water consumption and ensure your plants thrive.
- The fall weather is perfect for an irrigation check-up. It's as simple as turning on your irrigation system and walking around your yard to find and fix leaks. AMWUA's Smart Home Water Guide can help.
- Seasonal adjustment of irrigation schedules is one of the easiest and most effective ways to avoid wasting water. You should adjust your irrigation at least four times a year. Learn more about properly watering your new plants and how to adjust your watering schedule for fall and in preparation for winter.

### **Help is available**

All ten AMWUA communities have professional conservation staff dedicated to assisting their residents and businesses in efficiently using water. You can virtually visit your local water conservation office for more information. Additional resources are also available:

- *Take a class:* The cities work diligently to ensure they have a vast array of courses and workshops available on various topics so you can learn new skills to assist you with planning, planting, and caring for your plants.
- *Get a rebate:* Besides classes, each municipality provides its unique blend of water conservation rebates to help residents and businesses save water and money indoors and out. Visit the rebates section for the most up-to-date information, including how to apply for the available rebate programs within your city.
- *Hire the right pro:* If you are not the DIY type, it is essential to hire the right person to help you design, install, and maintain your landscape and ensure your irrigation system is running as efficiently as possible. As in any profession, not all landscape service providers are equal. The landscape professional you select to assist you should be a trusted partner who will provide expert advice, guidance, and services to help bring your outdoor living space to life.

Being wise with our outdoor water use is essential, regardless of the time of year. A well-planned, properly planted, water-efficient landscape will save you time, water, and money and

ensure your yard becomes the outdoor retreat you have always envisioned. So, prepare to head outdoors and enjoy the weather while planning, prepping, and planting.

*For over 50 years, the 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).*