

Planning For A Garden

Water wise landscaping uses simple, common sense gardening practices. Here are simple steps you can do to create a water-efficient landscape:

- ❑ **Planning and Design:** The planning and design of your landscape is one of the most important steps. Start by creating a master plan. This plan will help you design your landscape and select appropriate plants for each location. Include locations of structures, streets, views you want to keep or eliminate and sun orientation. Use native and/or adapted plants that will enhance the site and minimize long-term water consumption while keeping weeds and pests to a minimum.
- ❑ **Compost and Cultivate:** Soil amendments help improve absorption and water-holding capabilities. Work generous amounts of amendments such as peat moss or compost into the soil as deep as possible before planting.
- ❑ **Create Functional Turf Areas:** Turf requires more water and maintenance than most other plant material. Evaluate lawn areas to ensure these areas are practical and functional. Consider ground covers, low water-use plants and mulches for areas where foot traffic is undesirable or where there are steep slopes or sharp angles. Hardscape is another great way to enhance your yard. The use of rocks, concrete and wood for pathways and patios add areas of interest to your landscape.
- ❑ **Put The Right Plant in the Right Place.** Yards have several microclimates. Make note of your yard's hot and dry, and shady and damp areas, as different plants need different amounts of water to survive. Group plants with like sun and water needs together.
- ❑ **Water Wisely.** The greatest waste of water is watering too much, too often. Generally, turf requires more water than other plant material, so irrigate turf areas separately from plant areas. Adjust your watering to compensate for the changing weather conditions. An established lawn needs about 1" of water each week, and more during hot, dry spells. Drip irrigation is a great alternative for flower and shrub beds. Little or no water is lost to evaporation as the water is applied at ground level, near the plants' roots. Take advantage of water captured in ponds, swales, rain barrels or cisterns for significant water savings. High-tech watering systems make watering easier, but not necessarily more efficient. If you install an automatic system, be sure to adjust for seasonal changes and consider using a rain or soil sensing shut-off switch.
- ❑ **Use Mulches.** Mulches come in two forms - organic and inorganic. Organic mulches include aged manure, compost, bark chips or wood chips. Organic mulches enhance the soil's ability to store water. They cover and cool the soil, minimizing evaporation. Organic mulches also help with weed control and reduce soil erosion. Inorganic mulches include rock and gravel. Inorganic mulches absorb and re-radiate the sun's heat. This can increase the amount of water that surrounding plants will need to thrive.
- ❑ **Keep Up the Maintenance.** Routine maintenance such as pruning, pest control and fertilization will keep your plants healthy and your landscape at its peak. Check your irrigation system periodically for leaks and reprogram it at least monthly to adjust for changing weather conditions. Aerate lawns annually, and thatch as needed to ensure the roots are receiving the right amount of water.

If you need help with your water-wise landscape, consult a landscape professional, or seek advice from your local yard and garden center. Also, visit our 1+ acre Demonstration Garden at 170th Ave and Merlo Rd in Beaverton. It is filled with great planting ideas you can use in your yard.