

Outdoor Water Use in the United States

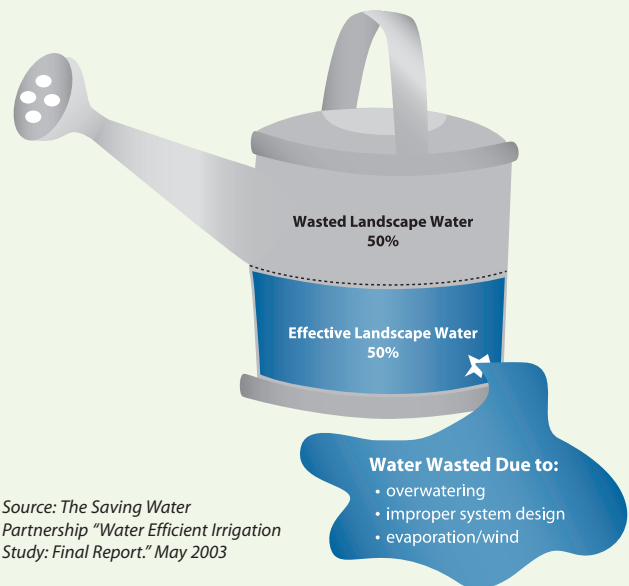
An American family of four can use 400 gallons of water per day, and about 30 percent of that is devoted to outdoor uses. More than half of that outdoor water is used for watering lawns and gardens. Nationwide, landscape irrigation is estimated to account for almost one-third of all residential water use, totaling more than 7 billion gallons per day. Other residential outdoor uses include washing automobiles, maintaining swimming pools, and cleaning sidewalks and driveways.

Water use varies greatly depending on geographic location and season, largely as a result of differences in climate. Water withdrawals for irrigation and landscaping are highest in the drier regions of the West and Southwest, where population growth is often greatest.

Some experts estimate that more than 50 percent of commercial and residential irrigation water use goes to waste due to evaporation, wind, improper system design, or overwatering. Following are some common outdoor water inefficiencies, but there are simple solutions to reduce water waste and produce great results:

- Many people water their lawns too often and for too long, oversaturating plants. It's usually not necessary to water grass every day. Instead, test your lawn by stepping on a patch of grass; if it springs back, it doesn't need water.
- Regular maintenance of an irrigation system can help ensure that water is distributed evenly on the lawn and does not overspray onto paved areas. Look for a WaterSense® irrigation partner to maintain and audit your system to keep it working efficiently.
- Weather-based irrigation controllers can reduce water use by 20 percent compared to conven-

Outdoor Water Use: Landscaping



Source: *The Saving Water Partnership "Water Efficient Irrigation Study: Final Report." May 2003*

tional equipment, potentially saving nearly 24 billion gallons per year across the United States—approximately equal to more than 7,000 hoses running non-stop for a year.

- Soil moisture sensors determine the amount of water in the ground available to plants. These sensors, when professionally installed and properly maintained, can potentially save a household more than 11,000 gallons of water used for irrigation annually.

WaterSense, a partnership program sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, seeks to help homeowners and businesses improve water efficiency and reduce their costs by promoting efficient irrigation technologies such as weather-based irrigation controllers and soil moisture sensors. For more information, visit <www.epa.gov/watersense>.