

Waterwise landscaping

This Florida-friendly technique saves water, time and money using the principles of Xeriscape

FAST FACT

Putting the right plant in the right place is a key to Xeriscape landscaping.

Florida is known for its beautiful, lush, green lawns. Even so, your lawn and landscape do not need rain or watering every day to stay that way.

Using the principles of an environmentally friendly landscaping technique known as Xeriscape, everyone who uses water outside can save water, time and money, and still have a beautiful landscape.

Benefits of Xeriscape







Following Xeriscape guidelines helps promote healthier lawns with deeper roots which are not subject to fungus and other diseases.

Xeriscape landscaping protects the environment by using native plants that have adapted to local conditions, are drought-tolerant and have developed a resistance to insects and disease.



Landscapes at homes and businesses can be lush and beautiful, while needing little water or lawn chemicals, using the Xeriscape (or Florida-friendly) landscape principles.

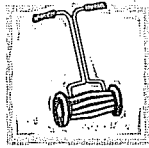
Xeriscape principles

- **Get a soil analysis.** Have a county cooperative extension service analyze soil samples from various areas of your yard. This analysis will tell you the level of acidity or alkalinity in your soil. This information will help you decide which plants will work best in your yard. 
- **Plan your landscape.** Create the Xeriscape that works best for your region by yourself or with a landscape professional. Evaluate the conditions in your yard, such as sunny and shady areas, how you will use sections of the yard and how large you want mature plants to be. 
- **Choose the proper plants.** Ask a landscape professional or nursery worker to help you choose native plants. Determine each plant's need for sun, shade, soil and water, and its tolerance for cold or salt. Match the plant's needs to the appropriate spot in your landscape. 
- **Use grass wisely.** Grass is often your yard's biggest water user. Save grass for areas where children or pets will play. In other areas, consider mulch or ground cover. 
- **Irrigate effectively.** Group plants together according to their water needs. For example, place plants that need frequent watering together and those plants that need less water in another zone. 
- **Mulch.** Using mulch holds moisture in the soil, reduces weed growth and slows erosion. Spread several inches of mulch, such as wood chips, pine straw or leaves, around shrubs, trees and flower beds. 

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- **Maintain your yard.** Mow, weed, prune and irrigate as needed. Xeriscape landscaping reduces maintenance needs in your yard, but won't eliminate yard work.



How much water is enough?

A rigid irrigation schedule is not necessary, especially when Mother Nature helps water your landscape with rain.

In general, most Florida grasses need only about 2/3 to 3/4 of an inch of water each time it rains or you irrigate. Watering needs change throughout the year.

Here are grass water needs when rain is not available:

- Between April and August, irrigate about every three to five days.
- In September and October, water every five to seven days.
- During winter months, lawns need water only once every 10 to 14 days.

When can I water my lawn?

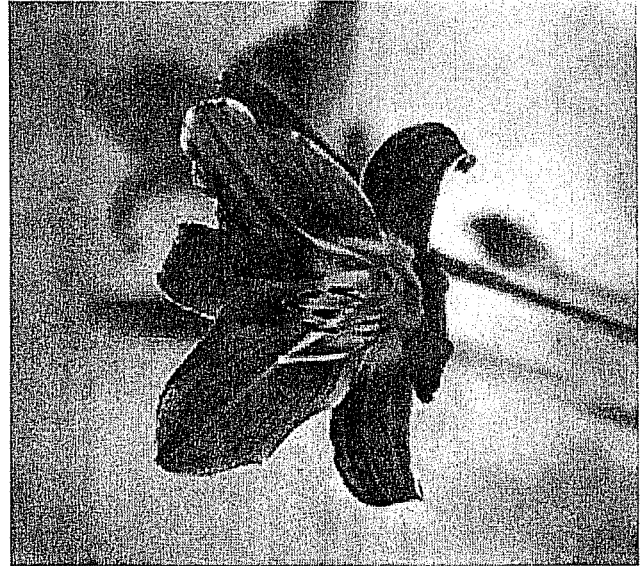
Outdoor irrigation is allowed only before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m. daily, unless reclaimed water is used and its use is displayed. The watering hours rule is in effect year-round.

The rule applies regardless of whether the water comes from a private well or a public utility. This means the rule applies to homeowners, farmers, growers, businesses, plant nurseries, industries and golf courses — anyone who uses water outdoors.

The St. Johns River Water Management District set the watering hours in 1991 as part of its water conservation rule, a rule designed to use water in the most efficient manner.

Why do we have a watering rule?

- When you water your lawn and landscapes before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m., the water can seep into the ground where thirsty grass and plant roots can drink up the water, promoting healthy plants that establish deep root systems.
- Water sprinkled on lawns during the hottest part of the day — between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. — is wasted. During the heat of the day, 65 percent of that water evaporates.
- Water droplets on plants can act like a magnifying glass, causing the sun to burn the leaves.



- Irrigating during the hours when it will do your lawn and landscapes the most good — before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m. — can save you money on your water bill or on your electric bill if you have a private well/pump.
- Though Florida usually receives about 50 inches of rain each year, only a small amount seeps into the ground to replenish underground aquifers. Aquifers are where 90 percent of us in north and east-central Florida — the region of the St. Johns District — get our drinking water.

Tips for a healthy lawn

- Do not overfertilize. Fertilizers stimulate growth and increase water needs. If you do fertilize, use a slow-release nitrogen product.
- Raise the height of your lawnmower blades. When you mow, remove only the top one-third of the grass. Cutting grass shorter than that decreases the depth to which roots will grow, increasing their need for water. Most St. Augustine and bahia grasses should not be mowed shorter than three inches in height.
- Leave short grass clippings where they fall. The clippings reduce the lawn's need for water and fertilizer. Remove thick patches of clippings from turf so that the clippings will not kill the grass underneath.
- Keep lawnmower blades sharp to cut clean. Grass torn and shredded by dull blades suffers stress and requires more water.