

For More Information

NebGuides

- Stormwater Management: Landscape Water Conservation G1859
- Perennial Flowers for Water-wise Gardeners (G1214)
- Mulches for the Home Landscape (G1257)
- Landscape Sustainability (G1405)

Backyard Farmer

<http://byf.unl.edu>

Nebraska Statewide Arboretum-

<http://arboretum.unl.edu.plantinfo.html>

For more information, see University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension sites droughtresources.unl.edu and water.unl.edu

For more water saving ideas, see the companion publications:

- **Make Every Drop Count On Your Lawn**
- **Make Every Drop Count In Your Home**

Drought

Droughts are a normal part of life in the Great Plains and for Nebraska. Many droughts are short-term or only affect small areas, but multiple-year droughts like the Dust Bowl of the 1930s are relatively common as well. In 2012, the entire state of Nebraska experienced the driest summer in more than 50 years. Conserving water in your home, lawn, and landscape helps to reduce the impact of residential water demand on our natural resources.

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Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
National Drought Mitigation Center
Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
Nebraska League of Municipalities
Nebraska Rural Water Association
Nebraska Well Drillers Association
UNL Conservation and Survey Division

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EXTENSION

Know how. Know **now**.

Make Every Drop Count

In Your Landscape



Make Every Drop Count in Your Landscape

Efficient water use in the landscape will provide for plant needs while conserving precious water resources.

1. The design of a landscape should incorporate a thorough assessment of site conditions (sun vs. shade, dry vs. wet, etc.) so that plants can be selected and located to take advantage of existing soil moisture conditions and remain healthy with minimal supplemental irrigation.



2. Install native and/or adapted plants that are drought resistant and require minimal supplemental irrigation once established (refer to web sites or consult your local nursery/garden center for suggestions).
3. Create water zones by putting plants together that have similar water needs. Ornamental plants, including turf species, can be grouped into low, moderate, and high water users. Water each zone according to its need for supplemental irrigation, which should be accurately

estimated based upon the month of application, actual precipitation, and weather conditions (refer to web publications).

4. Mulch garden plants (a 2-3 inch layer is most effective) to reduce evaporation and weed competition for available soil moisture. Organic mulches such as wood chips, evergreen needles, straw, corn cobs, and dried grass clippings also improve soil infiltration and water-holding capacity over time.
5. Amend soils with compost, manure, or leaf mold to improve the water holding capacity and infiltration of soils as well as plant vigor and health during drought conditions.
6. Carefully assess landscape watering patterns to minimize spray on sidewalks and paved surfaces, blockage of spray by plants or other obstructions, and run-off on slopes or clay soils.
7. Focus irrigation for woody plants at or beyond the dripline to promote extensive rooting. Apply water deeply and infrequently. Where practical, minimize evaporation and wind loss by using soaker hoses or drip systems, and water in the early morning (4 am to 10 am).
8. Maximize the value of natural rainfall by capturing and recycling rainwater in barrels or

buckets to water patio planters, or detain stormwater runoff in dry wells or streambeds to enhance landscape soil moisture.

9. Automatic irrigation of woody and perennial plants should be carefully adjusted throughout the growing season so that supplemental water applications do not exceed the water amounts required by plants and lost through evaporation.
10. Regardless of ability to tolerate drought, all plants require supplemental irrigation when first established. In order to increase water use efficiency and potentially improve plant establishment in a new landscape, consider hand-watering individual plants for the first several months of the growing season (especially those with large rootballs planted in extremely compacted soils). This will ensure that the limited root systems are efficiently receiving adequate water without necessitating irrigation coverage over the entire landscape area.
11. Check the performance of the landscape irrigation system periodically throughout the season. Use tuna cans to check the output of spray heads and coffee cans for drip systems.