

# Water Smart

**Overwatering depletes the water supply, increases stormwater runoff and pollution, makes plants more prone to disease and insects, and increases the need to mow. Base supplemental watering on plant needs.**

## Watering Lawns

*You Will Need:*

**Weather App**  
**Rain Gauge**  
**Plant Observations**

**Rain Shutoff** *(optional)*  
**Water Hose**  
**Sprinkler** *(optional)*

- **Look for early signs** of wilting and evaluate soil moisture. Apply  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of water when grass shows signs of distress, such as bluish-gray color or folded leaf blades. Do not water again until symptoms reappear.
- **Delay watering** if rain is predicted within the next 24 hours.
- **Use a rain gauge** to measure rainfall to determine if your grass needs water or not.
- **Install a rain shutoff device** or soil moisture sensor. An automatic sprinkler system delivers water on a programmed schedule. A shutoff device overrides the schedule when it rains or when the soil moisture reaches a preset level. Contact your local Extension office, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, or certified irrigation professional for assistance.
- **Stop in cooler months.** Little or no supplemental water is needed from November to March, typically the rainy season. Warm-season lawns are dormant in cool weather.



A rain gauge is a smart and inexpensive tool that helps manage supplemental water use in the landscape.

### ■ Did you know?

- More water/irrigation leads to faster growth and the need to mow more often.
- A healthy southern lawn (bahiagrass, bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, centipedegrass, St. Augustinegrass) will survive 2 months without rain or irrigation by going dormant (brown). It revives and resumes green growth after receiving rain or irrigation.



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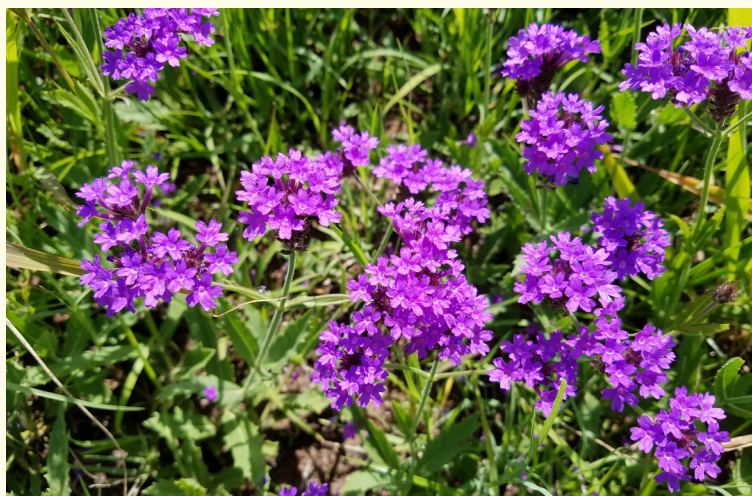
**By choosing and operating a watering system correctly, you can reduce water bills, insect and disease problems, and maintenance requirements.**

## Water Efficiently

*You Will Need:*

<b>Research</b>	<b>Plant Observations</b>
<b>Clock</b>	<b>Maintenance Plan</b>
<b>Rain Gauge</b>	<b>Site Observation</b>

- **Choose water-efficient** and drought-tolerant plants. Put them in the right place where they can thrive.
- **Create hydro zones.** If you group plants according to their water and light needs, you can simplify watering methods.



Purple verbena (*Verbena rigida*) is a perennial, non-native groundcover that blooms late summer to fall. Butterflies feed on its nectar. This species is extremely tolerant of heat and drought.

- **Water in the early morning** (4:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.) when temperature and wind speed are at their lowest, which reduces evaporation and drift. Lawns are less susceptible to fungal problems if wet leaves have time to dry before nightfall.
- **Avoid watering between** 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. when temperature and wind speeds are high and water is likely to be wasted.
- **Know how much water** should be applied. Lawn grass only needs  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of water per irrigation event. Two to three times per month is sufficient but not always necessary.
- **Experiment with gradual** reductions in watering. See if your plants can tolerate less water.

# Smart Yards Recipe Series

## Water Smart

### Water Efficiently

- **Ensure that your sprinkler** system operates properly and applies a uniform cover. Periodically check your system for broken heads or leaks. Understand how to turn off and drain the system.
- **Design** the lawn irrigation system separate from the bed areas.
- **Consider installing** a drip irrigation system for landscape plantings. These can be designed to deliver water directly to the root zone. Bubblers, micro sprays, and misters are also effective.
- **Keep irrigation heads** focused on the plants rather than on paved or other nonlandscaped areas.



Carolina jessamine is a native, drought tolerant vine recognized by bright spring flowers. The nectar is food for hummingbirds and native insects.