

Managing Your Landscape during Drought

What can I do to better manage my landscape during a drought?

Making sure your irrigation system is in proper working order is imperative.

- Regularly inspect your timer and valves to be sure they are in working order. Immediately replace any missing emitters or damaged sprinkler heads.
- Locate and use your rain shut off button on your controller when we receive precipitation. Learn where your outside water supply is, so you can shut it off in case of emergency or if your valve is not functioning properly.
- Adjust sprinkler heads so they are not spraying onto sidewalks, patios or driveways.

Follow basic landscape maintenance principles.

- Regularly weed granite areas as weeds can soak up valuable soil moisture that could otherwise be used by landscape plants.
- Do not shear prune shrubs. This can cause them to be less water efficient and cause sun scald on stems or branches.
- Apply organic mulch (shredded bark or compost) around the base of plants to help maintain soil moisture and reduce temperature.

Prioritize landscape water requirements by assigning monetary and functional values to your living landscape.

- Give trees a higher watering priority than grass or flowerbeds. Most grass areas can tolerate long periods of drought and if damaged can be replanted and will rejuvenate in a matter of months. Trees, however, are more difficult to replace. They take much longer to grow and can be costly to remove.
- Give functional grass areas a priority. Grass in the back yard nearest the patio should be given first priority. Grass in the front or side yards should be the first to lose water. Consider replacing grass with desert-adapted groundcovers, such as trailing rosemary or acacia.

What about my annual flowerbeds during a drought?



This is a great time to consider replacing your traditional bedding plants with more desert adapted wildflowers and perennials. Penstemon, poppies, aloes, lupines, and verbenas offer great color and attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Make sure to use organic mulch as a top dressing on beds to reduce moisture loss and weeds. Desert wildflowers can add color to your yard without using a lot of water.

How should we manage our landscape's trees during a drought?

Trees are the single most important living element in a landscape. They require consistent care regardless of conditions, and therefore the highest priority should be on their maintenance and watering

- Check frequently for drought stress including wilting, yellowing, and browning of leaf edges, defoliation, and branch-die-back. In a continued drought, leaves may be smaller than normal and drop prematurely. Although drought stress may not kill a tree outright, it could set it up for more serious diseases or insect infestations in following years.
- Water deeply and slowly. Apply water so it moistens the soil in the root zone to a depth of at least 16 - 18 inches (the recommended watering depth is 24 to 36 inches.)
- Do not fertilize a tree that is under drought stress. Fertilizers can stimulate growth, which may deplete stored energy reserves and result in additional foliage for the root system to maintain.
- Be careful when pruning. Pruning can open up canopies and cause sun scald on branches. Remove broken, dead or crossing branches because leaving these weakened branches could set the tree up for secondary infections.



How should I manage our grass during a drought?

Water as infrequently as possible without causing undue stress. In summer, applying water once every 3 days will keep your grass looking green and healthy. If you walk across the grass and leave foot prints, it is time to water. Make sure to water to a depth of at least six inches. Avoid fertilizing which will increase the growth rate. Be willing to accept a less-than-perfect turf and tolerate a few brown or yellow spots. Let your grass grow a little taller than normal. This will help shade the soil and slow evaporation. Set your mower to remove only 1/3 of the blade of grass at a time and make sure your mower blade is sharp.

Be sure to visit the City of Chandler Water Conservation web pages for free landscape workshops, landscaping tips, rebates, frequently asked questions and more.

www.chandleraz.gov/water

City of Chandler
Water Conservation Office
conserve@chandleraz.gov
480-782-3580

