



DROUGHT STRATEGIES

WEEKLY WATERING SCHEDULE

Soil Health

- Apply a 3-inch layer of mulch to soil surfaces and beneath plant canopies. Mulch will help to retain soil moisture and prevent weed seed germination.
- Ensure that mulch is kept away from plant stems as it can cause them to rot.
- Control weeds by removing the plant and roots. Weeds will use up some of the water stored in the soil.
- Incorporate compost into soil. Increasing organic matter content improves soil moisture holding capacity and provides additional plant nutrients. Note: some plants prefer native soils without amendment.
- Check soil moisture before watering by digging a small hole or using a soil probe.

Plants

- Group plants with similar water needs together. Different plants have different water requirements. The [Water Use Classification of Landscape Species \(WUCOLS\)](#) can be used to find this out.
- Many California native and Mediterranean plants are adapted to a summer-dry climate and will tolerate summer drought. They may go dormant early and reemerge with the first rains.
- Apply water to the plant root zone, beneath the plant canopy and away from plant stems. Root systems are typically at least as wide as the plant canopy, and most of the roots that take in water are away from the plant stem.
- Focus irrigation on trees as the most valuable plants in the landscape. Trees prefer infrequent watering. Water beneath the tree canopy and away from the tree trunk to a depth of 12-24 inches.
- Look for signs of drought stress in plant leaves such as color change from green to grayish green, wilting, or drying out.
- Allow lawns to grow to 2-3 inches tall, this will promote deeper roots and a higher tolerance for drought.
- Consider allowing lawns to brown, and reseed in the fall/winter, or consider changing to a more drought-tolerant landscape.

Irrigation

- Check your irrigation system for leaks by operating each valve and performing an inspection. Look for:
 - o Broken or severed pipes.
 - o Broken or missing sprinkler heads or emitters.
 - o Overspray onto hardscape.
 - o Misting due to high water pressure – needs a pressure reducer.

- Runoff due to leaky seals or running the system for too long.
- Update controller run times regularly for changing weather conditions using the Weekly Watering Schedule.
 - The schedule provides a run time in minutes and a number cycles. The purpose of this is to split the water applied into smaller amounts to help prevent runoff.
- Install a rain shutoff device if you don't have one.
- Consider investing in a smart irrigation controller, which adjusts automatically to give your plants just the right amount of water.
- Water in the early morning when it's cool and the wind is calm to reduce evaporation.

Microclimate

- Shaded areas need lower amounts of water, whereas hot sunny areas need more.
- Slopes may also need more water.

Alternative Water Sources

- Consider installing a graywater system to provide part of your landscape with a more drought-proof supply of water.
- In the future, consider installing a rain cistern to capture rainwater from roof surfaces.