



## Lawns and saving water

Lawns are often the focus for outdoor activities and most people want theirs to look green and healthy. By following a few simple steps you can achieve this without wasting valuable time, effort and water.

A lawn is often the first thing to suffer in drought conditions and although cutting back on your lawn area is a good idea, it is possible to have a lawn that will survive during dry periods.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Choose drought resistant grasses. Your local nursery can offer advice on water-efficient grasses.
- Apply a wetting agent. This will encourage even water penetration, helping any water you apply to reach the root zone and not run off.
- Use a balanced/complete fertiliser to encourage a deep, healthy root system. It is best applied in autumn or early spring, before good rainfall.
- Core and de-thatch your lawn in spring to encourage deep water penetration.
- Mow your lawn on the highest setting to avoid scalping your lawn and to minimise evaporation from the soil below.
- Mow on cooler days to avoid stress to your lawn.

### EFFICIENT WATERING

Before watering your lawn, take a good look at it to see if it really needs watering. A lawn generally needs watering when:

- the grass takes on a subtle blue tinge; or
- the grass does not spring back when it is walked on, and footprints are still visible two minutes later.

Check the four-day weather forecast with the Bureau of Meteorology ([www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)). If there is rain ahead, let the rain do your watering for you.

Cyclic watering is an efficient watering method that keeps your lawn healthy with minimal water usage. This method does not cause excessive pooling or run-off, and helps water to penetrate the soil. You can apply the following principles of cyclic watering to all watering methods.

Water the area until pooling or run-off begins (often five minutes is enough) and then turn the water off. Wait for half an hour to one hour to allow the water to soak into the soil, and then repeat the cycle. In between watering cycles, dig down to see how far the water has penetrated the soil. Repeat the cycle until the water reaches the depth of the root zone.

Watering deeply and infrequently encourages a deep, healthy root system.

Watering once a week is usually enough to keep a lawn alive, increasing to twice a week through summer, if necessary.

Scarab grub damage can occur during the summer months. If the lawn starts to turn brown, the soil is not dry and birds are pecking at the lawn, then these signs indicate you have grubs chewing on the root system on your lawn. Apply a lawn grub insecticide to control this.

### REDUCING GRASSED AREAS

Consider whether to reduce your lawn area by using permeable paving or planting hardy ground covers that require less water.

## **WATER RESOURCES STRATEGY**

*Think water, act water* is the ACT Government's strategy for sustainable water use and management. It aims to reduce Canberra's per person water consumption by 12 per cent by 2013 and 25 per cent by 2023.

*Think water, act water* provides a comprehensive framework for a partnership between the community, industry and government in managing, using and conserving the water resources of the region.

It includes an extensive range of measures, which will ensure water supply security for the ACT, protect and improve ecological values associated with our waterways, and improve the amenity of urban areas.

The strategy outlines a range of initiatives to be put in place to assist Canberrans to increase water efficiency around the home and garden.

## **WATER EFFICIENCY INCENTIVE PROGRAMS**

You may wish to consider the home and garden water efficiency programs offered as part of the ACT Government's water strategy, *Think water, act water*.

Details of all ACT Government water efficiency incentive programs are available from [www.thinkwater.act.gov.au](http://www.thinkwater.act.gov.au)

## **WATERWISE GARDENING WORKSHOPS**

ACTEW Corporation, in conjunction with local, independent specialists, offers waterwise gardening workshops designed to teach you how to have a healthier garden that uses less water. At the workshop you will learn about efficient garden watering systems and methods, and the benefits of using mulch and drought tolerant plants.

For more information, or to book a place at a workshop, call ACTEW's Water Conservation Office on 6248 3131.

## **XERISCAPE GARDENS**

Visit the ActewAGL Xeriscape Gardens at Heysen Street, Weston to learn more about water-efficient gardening. The gardens are open to the public at selected times on weekends during Spring and Summer (excluding the Christmas/New Year period), or by appointment.

To check details of opening times and events at the gardens, visit the ActewAGL website at [www.actewagl.com.au](http://www.actewagl.com.au) or call 6242 1191.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

For more information on water issues, water efficiency rebates and *Think water, act water* initiatives:

Ph: 13 22 81

Email: [WaterResources@act.gov.au](mailto:WaterResources@act.gov.au)

Website: [www.thinkwater.act.gov.au](http://www.thinkwater.act.gov.au)

For more information on Permanent Water Conservation Measures or other temporary water restrictions, call the ACTEW Water Conservation Office on 6248 3131, or visit [www.actew.com.au](http://www.actew.com.au)