Well-managed landscapes add beauty to our communities, while improving the environment and contributing to the economy.

Plants filter the air and water of harmful pollutants, cool our urban environments and if properly placed, reduce our energy costs. Parks, open spaces and gardens are essential to our well-being.

Protect your landscape investment by becoming water wise. With the projected dramatic increases in the state's population will come increased demand for precious natural resources, including water.

Water, though one of our most valuable assets is often the most taken for granted. How can you become water wise?
Here are seven easy steps to increase your water efficiency and help your plants survive future droughts and water restrictions.

STEP 1: Select Plants that will Thrive

Well designed, installed and maintained landscapes offer years of environmental benefits and beauty. Design your landscape with your site and soil in mind. Include a variety of plants: annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees, turf and ornamental grasses.

- Choose plants suited to the micro climates located throughout your landscape.
- Select species that are tolerant of difficult urban/suburban sites and the wide range of weather conditions your area receives.
- North Carolina natives may be suitable, but many equally beautiful non-native plants will work well and pose no threat to our native plant populations.
- Balance areas of turf and landscape plantings for practical water use and management.
- Remember that even drought-tolerant plant species need water during the establishment period.
- Year-round planting is possible with careful attention to irrigation needs. Ask your county extension agent for guidance in your area.

STEP 2: Prepare the Site

Healthy soil has a good balance of air and water space, supports beneficial organisms and provides nutrients for plant growth.

- Get your soil tested and amend where necessary for your plant selections.
- Till your planting areas and incorporate organic matter to improve drainage and provide nutrients.
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- Minimize activities that may compact the soil.
- Compaction limits root growth, reduces water infiltration and plant growth and increases runoff.

STEP 3: Manage Your Turf

Turf provides many environmental benefits, such as reducing runoff and soil erosion and filtering pollutants. To keep turf healthy and stress-tolerant:

- Aerify areas to improve water infiltration.
- Fertilize and water according to recommendations for your species.
- Match mower height to your turf species.

- Consult your turfgrass professional to assess quality year-round, particularly during a drought.
- For new installation and turf management tips, visit NC State **www.turffiles.ncsu.edu**

STEP 4: Apply Mulch

Mulch finishes your landscape beds, protects tree roots, keeps the soil cool, reduces moisture loss from soil by 10-25% and slowly breaks down, adding extra organic matter.

- Apply no more than 3" of mulch for woody landscape beds and individual trees.
- Apply no more than 2" for perennial and annual beds.
- Keep mulch away from trunks or crowns of plants.
- Use high quality mulch products.

STEP 5: Water Efficiently

Water-wise landscapes use only enough water to maintain plant health and vigor and limit water waste. Water efficient practices also reduce the pollution of our water resources, while saving you money!

- Group plants with similar water requirements.
- Install drip irrigation or use soaker hoses in landscape beds.
- For individual, newly planted trees apply water directly to roots and just beyond. Use hose-end on low flow, watering bags or 5-gallon buckets with small holes.
- Use fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides at proper rates and follow directions to ensure they do not pollute the water supply.

STEP 6: Irrigate Efficiently

rain sensor

Properly designed, installed and maintained irrigation systems are a highly effective means of sustaining landscapes and lawns.

- Apply water at dawn or dusk to minimize evaporation.
- Install rain sensors on automatic irrigation systems.
- Have an irrigation professional audit your system for irregular distribution, leaks, and overspray onto paved areas.
- Ask about "smart" controllers that apply water based on plant requirements and local weather.

STEP 7: Capture Rain Water

Prevent storm water runoff and save the rainwater for use in the landscape.

- Properly installed rain barrels catch water for small scale watering needs. Cisterns can be installed for large scale uses.
- Plant rain gardens that capture and retain water, while filtering contaminants.
- A properly installed, healthy and well-maintained landscape absorbs and filters more water than an unhealthy site.

Follow these simple steps for a beautiful landscape that is water efficient, environmentally friendly and contributes to the quality of life in our communities, today, and long into the future.

For more information visit:
tarheelgardening.com

website maintained by the
NC Nursery and Landscape Association

North Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association

To create a water diary and receive specific weather based water requirements for your lawn, Visit:
www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/tims/

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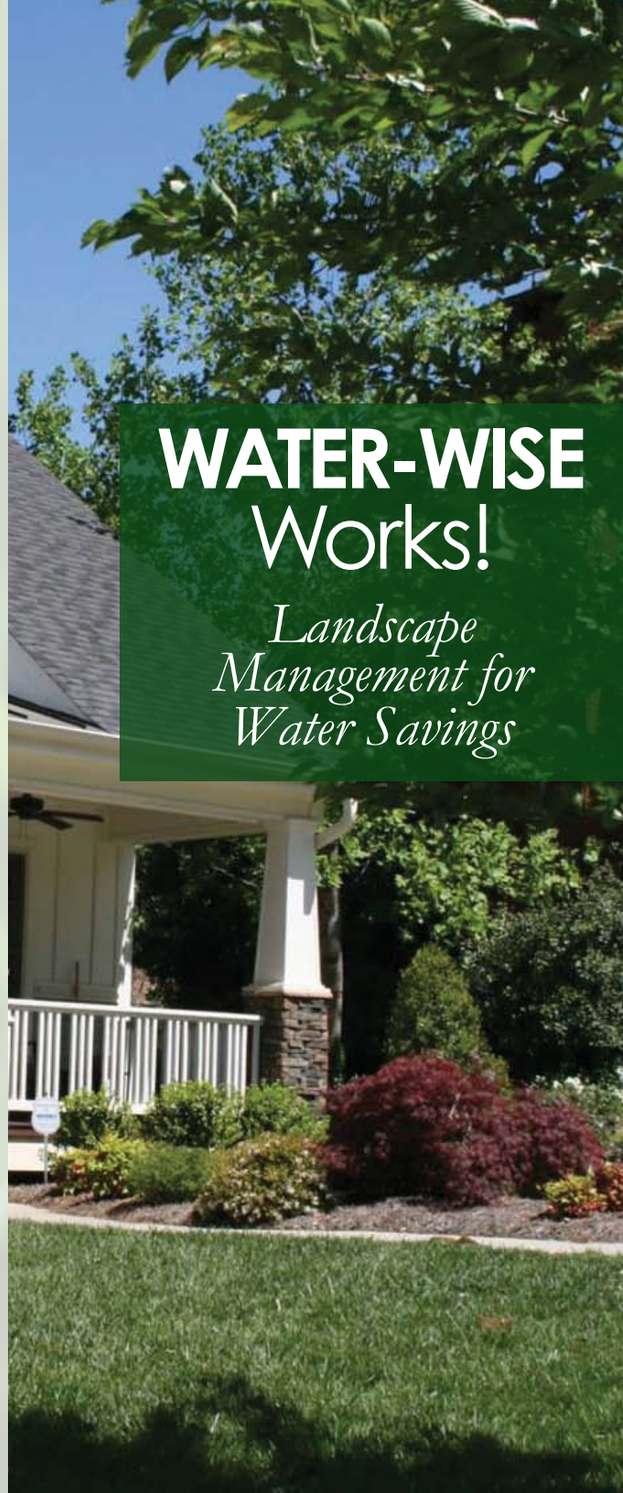

WATER-WISE Works!

Landscape Management for Water Savings