Lawn Watering Wisdom Toolkit

This toolkit aims to help Dakota County partners understand and share information about the Lawn Watering Wisdom Campaign.

For more information, visit:
https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Environment/WaterResources/Groundwater/Pages/water-wise-challenge.aspx

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Eagan - Inver Grove Heights Watershed Management Organization

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Dakota County

Vermillion River watershed reflecting life

LMR WMO Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization

Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District

Campaign Overview

Campaign Purpose

Lawn Watering Wisdom (LWW) is a water conservation initiative designed to educate and empower residents on efficient outdoor water use specifically related to lawn irrigation and landscaping. The campaign provides actionable guidance on sustainable watering practices, water efficient irrigation systems, and landscaping with native plants, all aimed at reducing water waste and promoting environmental stewardship.

Objectives

- **Promote Water Conservation:** Encourage communities to adopt efficient watering practices that conserve water resources, lower utility bills, and foster healthier landscapes.
- **Raise Awareness:** Educate residents about the importance of responsible watering to protect local ecosystems and reduce overuse during peak summer months.
- **Support Financial Incentives:** Highlight available rebates and grants for residents who purchase and install water-efficient products, further incentivizing sustainable practices.

Educational Components

- **Watering Best Practices:** Tips to ensure you are only watering when your lawn truly needs it, and guidance on how to use compost and mowing height to enhance water retention.
- **Seasonal Irrigation Checks**: Regular irrigation system audits are encouraged to fix leaks, adjust settings, and maximize efficiency, as unchecked systems can waste up to 25,000 gallons over a six-month season.
- **Native Plant Landscaping:** Recommendations for using native plants, which require less water and maintenance, to create sustainable and attractive landscapes.

Key Messaging

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- **Conserving Water to Protect Drinking Supplies:** Over 90% of Dakota County residents rely on groundwater for drinking water, yet groundwater is a limited resource that can take thousands of years to replenish. The clean water our community drinks is the same water used for irrigation. Reducing outdoor water use helps prevent groundwater depletion, ensuring clean drinking water for future generations.
- **Efficient Watering Practices:** Lawns need only 1 inch of water per week, including rainfall. Watering deeply twice a week for about 30 minutes is more effective than daily watering. This practice fosters deeper root growth, resulting in healthier, more drought-resistant grass.
- **Environmental Impact of Outdoor Water Use:** By adjusting landscape irrigation habits and checking for leaks in irrigation systems, residents can save thousands of gallons of water each week. This not only helps lower water bills but also conserves essential water resources, protecting the environment.
- **The Benefits of Smart Irrigation Choices:** Watering during early morning or late evening hours, using drip irrigation or soaker hoses, and installing weather informed irrigation controllers all help reduce water waste. These simple changes ensure water reaches plant roots efficiently, preventing waste on sidewalks or driveways and lowering unnecessary water use.

Tools & Resources

Supporting Tools & Additional Resources

- Watering Tips: Provided by the EPA, this page shares tips to help you water less and water smarter.
- Sprinkler Spruce-Up: Videos, checklists and more guiding homeowners how to maintain their sprinkler system.
- University of Minnesota Turfgrass Science: Find resources to help homeowners have healthier lawns and more efficient irrigation systems.
- Irrigation System Auditing Guide: The University of Minnesota Extension's resource on auditing home lawn irrigation systems assists residents in minimizing water loss through regular system checks.
- Irrigation Association: Resources about the social, economic and environmental benefits of efficient irrigation. July is Smart Irrigation Month, check out their resources to spread further awareness.
- Department of Natural Resources: Browse their water conservation resources.

Checklist

Click here for the EPA's WaterSense checklist.
Make sure your irrigation system is water-efficient!

Check below to see if you are following these water-efficiency best practices:

- [ ] I do not water my lawn when there has been one inch of rainfall that week. Grass only needs one inch of water a week - rain counts!
- [ ] I only water in the early morning or evening.
- [ ] My irrigation system communicates with local weather stations as it is run by a smart irrigation controller.
- [ ] I fix any broken or leaking sprinklers to prevent waste. One broken sprinkler could waste as much as 1,000 gallons of water per week.
- [ ] I adjust my sprinklers to make sure they only water the lawn, not the sidewalk or driveway.
- [ ] I keep my grass longer. This helps promote a more drought-resistant lawn.
- [ ] I aerate and add compost to my soil.

FAQs

What is Lawn Watering Wisdom?
Lawn Watering Wisdom (LWW) is a water conservation campaign focused on reducing water usage outdoors related to irrigation and landscaping. The campaign encourages residents to adopt sustainable practices that reduce water waste by offering guidance on efficient home irrigation systems, watering practices, and the use of native plants that require minimal water.

Why is efficient outdoor watering important?
Efficient watering conserves groundwater, a limited resource. It reduces water waste, especially during hot, dry months, and helps protect local water resources by preventing overuse.

How much water does a lawn typically need?
Lawns generally need only about 1 inch of water per week, including rainfall. Overwatering can lead to shallow roots and weaker plants, making them more vulnerable to drought.

When is the best time to water my lawn?
The best time to water is early in the morning, before 10 a.m. This helps reduce evaporation and allows plants to absorb water more effectively. Avoid watering during the hottest parts of the day to prevent water waste.

How can I tell if my lawn needs watering?
Look for signs like dull or grayish-green grass and footprints that remain visible on the lawn. These can indicate that your lawn needs water. But don't forget, turf grass goes dormant to conserve nutrients and energy. The grass won't die unless there is a very long period of drought and extreme heat.

What are some efficient ways to water my lawn?
Install a smart irrigation controller, so your irrigation schedule is set based on local weather data. Consider using drip irrigation or soaker hoses, which deliver water directly to the roots. Additionally, ensure sprinklers are positioned to avoid watering sidewalks, driveways, or other non-landscape areas.

FAQs

How do native plants help conserve water?
Native plants are adapted to the local climate and usually require less water, fertilizer, and maintenance. Incorporating them into your landscape can significantly reduce water needs.

What is a smart irrigation system?
A smart irrigation system is an advanced type of irrigation technology designed to optimize water use, conserve resources, and reduce costs. A rain sensor pauses irrigation during rainfall, while a weather-based irrigation system adjusts schedules using local weather station data for optimal efficiency. You can check your city's website below to see if there are rebates available for certain types of smart irrigation systems.

How often should I adjust my irrigation system?
Check and adjust your irrigation system monthly to ensure it's working efficiently. This includes fixing leaks, adjusting sprinkler heads, and updating settings based on current weather and rainfall. You could be losing up to 25,000 gallons over a six-month irrigation season due to leaks. For more information, visit Auditing Home Lawn Irrigation Systems or EPA's Sprinkler Spruce-Up page.

What is the benefit of using mulch in landscaping?
Mulch helps retain soil moisture, reduce evaporation, and suppress weeds. By adding a layer of mulch around plants, you can reduce the need for frequent watering.

Can mowing have an impact on water conservation?
Yes, setting mow height to 3.5" allows your grass to grow deeper roots, resulting in a stronger, healthier, more drought-resistant lawn. For additional resources on managing your lawn, visit the University of Minnesota's Turfgrass Science Resources page.

FAQs

What resources are available to increase water efficiency?
The Metropolitan Council awarded over $70,000 in grants to cities in Dakota County to support water conservation. Water efficiency rebates are available for residents who purchase irrigation controllers and range from $75 to $250. You can find city-specific rebate information below:

- Apple Valley
- Burnsville
- Eagan
- Farmington
- Lakeville
- Northfield
- Rosemount

You can transform your lawn into a pollinator friendly, low maintenance and resilient space through Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District's ***Lawns Reimagined Program*****.** The program offers free workshops, expert advice, design help, on-site support, free grass seed and up to five free yards of compost.

Sign up for updates and register for the program here.

Social Media Graphics

Follow the link below to download graphics and video content to share on your social media accounts. You can post these graphics with the copy on the next page of this toolkit.

Lawn Watering Wisdom Graphics & Video

Example Graphics

Lawn Watering Wisdom Logo

Lawn Watering Wisdom

Lawn Watering Wisdom

Social Media Copy

Example 1
Over 90% of Dakota County relies on groundwater for drinking. We can reduce outdoor water use to protect this limited resource for future generations.
Learn more!
https://www.cognitoforms.com/DakotaCountyMN/WaterWisePledgeForm

Example 2
The Lawn Watering Wisdom Campaign will help you find news ways to conserve your water usage, such as planting a native garden, or installing smart irrigation systems.
Learn more here:
https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Environment/WaterResources/Groundwater/Pages/water-wise-challenge.aspx

Example 3
Lawns need just 1 inch of water per week. Deep watering twice a week helps roots grow stronger and healthier.
Learn more!
https://www.cognitoforms.com/DakotaCountyMN/WaterWisePledgeForm

Example 4
Water smarter with drip irrigation, rain sensors, and watering in the cool hours. Save water and help your plants thrive!
Learn more here:
https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Environment/WaterResources/Groundwater/Pages/water-wise-challenge.aspx