

# Key Drought Messages for Homeowners

**Landscapes can survive using less water.** ALCC and GreenCO members can help you train landscape plants to use less water and still be healthy and vigorous. Plants and our yards enhance our quality of life. Gardening is an extremely popular and healthy hobby. A beautiful landscape and outdoor water conservation are not mutually exclusive if you learn how to use wisely.

**Protect your investment.** Most people have a good amount of money invested in their yards. Attractive landscapes translate into the economic value of property in terms of the curb appeal that draws homebuyers, shoppers and other customers. A 5 percent investment in landscaping can raise the value of a home by 15 percent. Businesses with attractive and well-maintained landscapes enjoy more retail traffic, higher occupancy rates and reduced crime. Landscaping can add as much as 15 percent to the resale value of a home and speed up its sale by as much as 6 weeks. Don't depreciate your property values by letting landscape go in a drought.

**Xeriscape is not a garden style, it's a system** –Xeriscape isn't a specialty garden, rather a system of important principles that all work together to conserve water in the landscape. Key elements of this system include:

- Design a comprehensive landscape that accounts for water drainage, exposure and soil types.
- Evaluate soil and improve if necessary.
- Group plants according to water needs.
- Water efficiently with a properly designed irrigation system.
- Use mulch to reduce surface evaporation.

**Technology, technology, technology.** Nowhere in landscape is technology making more of a difference than in irrigation. The development of 'smart' controllers that base water on the needs of the plants and soil, and new sprinkler nozzles and equipment can make landscape watering more efficient than ever. Find a professional to help you benefit from this new technology. Check with your local water utility to see what types of rebates and services they are offering for irrigation technology upgrades – they're well worth the investment in the water savings, and the rebate is an excellent added incentive.

**Watch your consumption and adjust.** Ten years ago, it was often quite difficult to see consumption on a regular basis. Many water providers were billing once a month or even once every two months. Now, in many locations, it's possible to see consumption much faster, which allows for better and quicker adjustment of irrigation systems. Having landscape pros help consumers and HOAs with watching bills and saving water has made a big difference in consumption. With new irrigation technology, it's easier than ever to adjust your sprinkler clock. Learn how – and make sure you're watering according to the weather conditions.

**No water means dead grass; low water means dormant grass.** Kentucky blue grass is one of the most drought resistant plants in the landscape. It can go dormant (i.e., turn brown) in the heat of summer, but don't worry about a few brown spots. It will return to green in the fall.



**GreenCO's Best Management Practices (BMPs), that include the seven principles of Xeriscape, have become the state standard.** 2002-03 really raised awareness for drought in Colorado. As a result of that, our industry Best Management Practices have become the standard for outdoor water use and management via the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI), the Governor's office of Energy Management, state law and various city codes and ordinances.

**Not caring for landscape during drought will devastate our urban forests.** Mature trees are virtually irreplaceable and are an important community asset. Denver is considered to be one of the 10 best cities in the U.S. for its urban forest, according to the American Forests. American Forests defined urban forests as "ecosystems of trees and other vegetation in and around communities including yard trees, vegetation within parks and along public rights of way and water systems. Keeping these urban forests alive and well provides communities with environmental, economic and social benefits and habitat for fish and wildlife.

**The economic impacts of drought are felt by everyone: water providers, property owners and the green industry, who contributes more than \$2B to the state's economy and employs 40,000 Coloradoans.** Keeping landscapes alive and maintaining property values should be a priority for policy makers.

**Trees, plant and grass all have major benefits to the environment.** Plants create shade, which reduces energy, produces oxygen, and absorbs carbon dioxide. One tree or a 2,500-square foot lawn each release enough oxygen each day to supply a family of four. Trees in cities mitigate rising temperatures by shading hot pavement and cutting energy consumption in buildings. The front lawns of eight houses have the cooling effect of about 70 tons of air conditioning. Green spaces cleanse our water. When water is allowed to run through landscapes, it typically exits cleaner than when it entered, reduces storm water runoff and keeps pollutants out of ground water. In contrast, impervious surfaces like asphalt and concrete simply move water and the pollutants into the storm water system.

**We saved more water outdoors in the 2002-03 than was saved indoors, say water providers.** That's really something when you realize that outdoor water only happens for part of the year. Consumers continue to demand water conservation and participate in conservation measures, even 10 years later. The green industry really is part of the solution; ten years later we are ready to help consumers learn or re-learn how to care for their landscapes during drought.

