

BE A WATER-SAVER!

by Dr. Robert J. Black

The demand on Florida's limited water supply increases steadily as the population continues to grow and the state becomes more urbanized. This problem has been compounded by the recent drought. Water supplies are extremely low and restrictions on water use for irrigation of landscape plants are being enforced in many parts of the state.

The following are tips to help you use limited irrigation water as efficiently as possible.

Stretch the number of days or weeks between watering to the longest suitable interval.

Soak deeply. Light sprinklings waste water and do little to satisfy the water

requirements of a plant.

Adjust sprinklers to avoid waste to sidewalks, streets and gutters.

Keep sprinkler heads clean to assure even distribution of water.

Check hose and faucet washers.

Water lawns in the early morning hours. Watering during the day can waste water through excessive evaporation.

Remove thatch from turf. A thick thatch layer restricts water movement into the soil.

Increase mowing height of lawns. This increased height allows the plant to develop a deeper root system.

Control all weeds. Weeds exhaust water which may be needed to keep plants alive.

Reduce fertilizer applications. Fertilizer promotes growth and will increase the need for water.

Prune. If water supply is so limited that literal survival of plants is in question, appreciable pruning can be done at the peak of water shortage.

Improve soil. The addition of organic matter (peat, compost, well rotted manure, bark, etc.) to sandy soil will increase its water retention and therefore reduce the frequency of watering.

Mulch. Use 2 inches of mulch on annual bed areas and around trees and shrubs.

Cull out poor woody plants. Don't waste water caring for marginal or undesirable plants.