Last month, we started a multi-series article about landscape water conservation. In this addition, we will continue with how to implement a plan to achieve this in your landscape.

Start With a Plan

Creating a water-efficient landscape begins with a well-thought-out landscape design. Sketch your yard, showing the locations of buildings, trees, shrubs, gardens and grass areas. Then consider how you use the various areas of your yard, how you want your yard to look, the amount of maintenance you plan to give it, and the budget you can afford. Also pinpoint the areas of your landscape that require the most water. The purpose of planning is to design a landscape that will have the appearance and function you desire while conserving water.

Analyze and Prepare the Soil

Have your soil tested. (Your county Extension agent can tell you how.) The test results will tell you what kinds and amounts of fertilizer your soil needs, and whether you should add organic matter. Most soils benefit greatly from organic matter. Adding organic matter to the soil of shrub and flower bed areas makes plants healthier.

Be Practical with Turf Areas

When designing the landscape, keep in mind that turf grasses need more water and maintenance than most other plants. To conserve water, reduce the size of the lawn by including patios, decks, shrub beds and groundcovers in the landscape design.

Select Appropriate Plants

Select trees, shrubs and groundcovers that are adapted to your region’s soil and climate. Most require less water and fertilizer and have fewer pest problems than non-adapted exotic plants that have been introduced into Texas landscapes.

When it comes to selecting a turf grass, remember that the different varieties have very different water requirements. One of the best ways to conserve water is to select a grass that is adapted to your area of the state and that has a low demand for water.

Water Efficiently

Tremendous amounts of water are applied to lawns and gardens, but much of it is never absorbed by the plants and put to use. Some water runs off because it is applied too rapidly. When too much water is applied to the landscape it can leach nutrients deep into the soil away

from plant roots, and possibly pollute groundwater. Runoff also can cause pollution by carrying fertilizers and pesticides into streams and lakes.

Lawns

Most lawns receive twice as much water as they need. The key to watering lawns is to apply the water only when the grass needs it, but water thoroughly. This creates a deep, well-rooted lawn that efficiently uses water stored in the soil.

Be sure to come see us at the Farm Show December 3rd and 4th. We will be conducting CEU workshops for Private and Commercial Applicators. We will also be conducting food demonstrations and taste testing opportunities!

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