



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 17, 2017

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Save smart, water smart during Smart Irrigation Month

Along Front Range and across Colorado, the dog days of this summer are already skyrocketing into above-normal temperatures with triple digit figures. Fire restrictions have been declared across the state, and record temperatures are only anticipated to continue into August and September. In his “Smart Irrigation Month” proclamation, Governor John Hickenlooper pinpoints July as the peak month for irrigation water usage. In the spirit of conserving our precious water resources, Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado offers the following tips to help homeowners save money and use water wisely this summer.

ALCC’s Top 5 Irrigation Tips

- **The best sprinkler system can’t compensate for poorly designed landscapes**
Even the best sprinkler system with all the bells and whistles won’t be a be-all end-all if your landscape is poorly designed. Group like plants together, placing those that like hot, dry conditions in full sun and shade-loving plants in protected areas. Rezone sprinklers to accommodate the different needs of mature trees and shrubs. Good soil makes for good water absorption and mulch is a must in plant beds and tree wells.
- **Over watering is a plant serial killer**
Hot weather tempts us to over water, causing water waste and higher utility bills. But did you know that too much water can harm and kill too? Over watering is actually the most common causes of death in plants since drowning a plant keeps its roots from absorbing the oxygen it needs to live. Mildew, mold, fungus, and root rot can also destroy your plants when too much water sits around their roots.
- **Save water one drip at a time**
Water every plant in your landscape, except grass, with drip irrigation. This keeps water from evaporating in a breeze or spilling into a gutter. Water goes right to the plant’s roots, where it is most needed. Wherever possible, convert less water-efficient spray heads to drip irrigation nozzles.
- **Use the soak and repeat strategy at the right time of day**
Instead of letting your irrigation run on one long cycle, set your system for several spaced and shorter cycles (for example: two, 5-minute intervals). Time each cycle five minutes apart to allow for absorption of water deep into the soil. This cycle and repeat method ensures

your water (and money) won't be wasted as run-off. And of course, never run your system during the day. Water before 7 a.m. and after 7 p.m. to avoid evaporation caused by wind or heat. Watering midday results in a 30 percent loss of irrigation water.

- **Increase your sprinkler system's IQ**

The amount of water that your lawn and garden need varies greatly day to day and season by season. Upgrade your system by adding "smart" sprinkler controls and components that alter the amount of water to account for changes in soil moisture, rain, evaporation and plant water use. Soil moisture sensor kits are often less than \$200 and can increase water savings by 40 percent!

The Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC), with six chapters statewide, is the premier professional organization for Colorado's landscape companies. For more than 55 years, ALCC has guided landscape professionals to address Colorado's unique climate and to promote sustainable landscapes. ALCC promotes the responsible use of water and other natural resources. More information at www.alcc.com. [Click on Tip of the Week](#) for free, weekly lawn and garden advice.