



# Save Water → Start Today

Conserving water isn't just "being green", it's being smart. Water supplies are tight, and getting tighter all the time. As of spring '08, Virginia is still in a drought, despite having had a good amount of rain. We urge people to be waterwise, and try to conserve water whenever possible. Listed below are several ways you can help:

**Right plant, right place** This is simple—make sure you have the right plant for the right place. When you plant a shrub in the wrong spot, like a shade plant in a sunny spot, you waste so much water trying to make it survive and grow. If you're not sure if a plant will survive where you want to plant it, ask!! By planting native plants, you reduce the need for excessive watering.

**Reduce green lawn spaces** It's a strange idea, coming from a garden center, but by reducing the amount of lawn you have, you also cut down on water usage. Not to mention the amount of fertilizer and weed killer you might use. Don't try to grow grass where it just won't grow— under shade trees, on a slope, or in an area where moss has taken over. If you don't like all the care involved in taking care of tall fescue, consider switching to a low maintenance, warm season grass such as zoysia or Bermuda. They take longer to become established (from seed anyways), and they turn yellowish beige in the winter, but they also require minimal water and hardly any fertilizer or weed killer or any kind.

**Use soaker hoses, timers, drip systems** Soaker hoses, timers & drip systems do the watering for you. They are also highly efficient in how water is used, provided they are placed properly. Soaker hoses are porous hoses usually made from recycled rubber. They have a rough texture with thousands of tiny holes that literally weep water. Soaker hoses can be used in almost any situation, but they aren't meant to water lawns. They work great with water systems that don't have a lot of water pressure. Timers will turn the water on and off automatically, releasing you from doing that job. There are a number of different ones available, from simple twist timers that you need to set every time you use them, to digital ones that can water for any number of periods over several weeks. Drip systems are far superior to sprinkler systems for watering plants. Drippers will put water exactly where it is needed, provided it is set up properly. There are small homeowner kits available that don't cost a lot of money, usually under \$50, and there are build-your-own sets and professionally installed systems too. Obviously, the more you spend, the better system you get. Sprinkler systems are really best left to watering lawns. They usually don't put out enough water to adequately water trees and shrubs, unless they are run often and for long periods of time. Loss of water due to evaporation is something to consider when using a sprinkler system.

**Rain barrels** Rain barrels can be any kind of container used to catch rainwater. There are several styles available commercially that hold approximately 50 gallons, and they usually come with everything you need — downspout extender, hose, etc. Rainwater is actually the best water for plants— there is no substitute. So use a bucket if you have to, but save that rainwater!!

**Waterwands** Not technically a water saving device, but they do help you put water just where you need it. Wands are available in lengths of 16" to 36" inches, with different kinds of shower heads and shut off valves. Very easy to use, lightweight, and they come in fabulous fun colors.

**Soil Moist** Soil Moist is a polymer that retains water, releasing it as the plant needs it. It looks like Jell-O when it's full of water. Very easy to use, highly recommended for containers and hanging baskets. Be sure to follow the instructions—more is better, is definitely NOT a good idea when using Soil Moist, or you'll have an environmental hazard on your hands. It can also be used in the ground for planting annuals, perennials, and shrubs.

**Treegators** Treegators are the brown or green bags you see around the base of trees that have just been planted. They hold about 15-20 gallons of water, and sloooooowly release the water thru tiny holes in the bottom of the bag. This ensures that the roots get a thorough watering over a period of time. Trees need to be deep watered to develop a good strong root system. Shallow roots will not support a tree's life system,