

A good majority of water consumed in the average home is applied to the landscape. With some attention and basic knowledge, it's highly likely that you can reduce your water usage and still maintain a healthy landscape. Once new plants become established (one growing season for shrubs and two for trees) they can live on less water than you think, the trick is determining the threshold.

Here are a few tips:

1. Make sure your system is not leaking. With everything off, inside and out, observe the dial on your water meter (usually located in the front yard). If it's still turning, there is water leaking.
2. Cap off emitters to the desert adapted trees (Palo Verde, Ironwood, Mesquite). Their roots are extensive and normally receive enough water from surrounding shrubs.
3. Now, to determine the threshold, turn your water off to the plants. Then, over the next several days, pay special attention to shallow rooted plants like Lantana or Bursage (these are the ones that need the most frequent water). Look for signs of wilting on the leaf surface. This may take a few days in the summer, or in cooler weather, may stretch to weeks. **Count the days until you notice the wilt, (this is your threshold) this will give you an idea of how many days you can go between water cycles.** The optimum programming is to apply water just before the wilt point of the neediest plants (smaller, shallow rooted) on that particular irrigation zone.
4. The same idea applies to your turf. The added difference here is, the grass will usually dry up in selected areas. These are the locations to focus in on as they are probably receiving less water, indicating that the system is unbalanced. Balancing the system usually involves adjustments to sprinkler nozzles,



Desert plants typically take much less water than you might think. In some cases, emitters can be completely capped to save water and still maintain a healthy plant.

- head heights and head spacings. Improving the balance is worth the effort. **A balanced system can mean saving a water cycle or two per week.** Note: for equal areas of granite (with drip irrigation) and turf, turf requires 4-6 times the amount of water.
5. Adjust your program with the seasons. May to the beginning of monsoon season are the heaviest months. With increased humidity (usually mid July through August) systems programs can be reduced by 10-25%. Spring and fall can be reduced 25-50% off the heavy months, with winter months 75 to 100%.
 6. Take advantage of every rainfall. Turn your clock to the "off" or "rain" position and monitor for the wilting point before reactivating.
 7. Keep a log of your cycles per week. Monitor the current usage on your water bill and compare with your watering cycles and previous month's usage.

For further information visit

<http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/region/arizona>