

Plan now for a dry gardening season

Since Oct. 1, 2020, central Douglas County has received about 24 inches of rain versus our 30 year average for the same time frame of 32 inches.

Since March 1, 2021 we have received only 1.8 inches, making this the driest March, April and early May in the past 30 years.

Our county and much of Southwest Oregon is presently classed as abnormally dry to extreme drought. The current 90 day forecast for the summer of 2021 is projecting this current dry pattern to continue with no significant rain.

Another indicator of the coming dry summer is that stream flows along the South Umpqua are already at low summer levels and water demand is kicking in early for

cities like Roseburg.

In a typical winter month the city of Roseburg uses about 4.5 million gallons of water per day. In a typical summer month water use in Roseburg will jump to over 10 million gallons per day. Most of this increase in water use is directly linked to the irrigation season. With this dry start to the 2021 growing season, and our normal dry season coming in June, I would like to remind gardeners of a few ways to be water wise in our landscapes and gardens.

Most homeowners pour the water to their lawns during summer. Simply by reducing the total area irrigated you can save large amounts of water. Focus on watering a small area near your patio or front lawn and let some of the fringe areas dry out with just one or two



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applications of water a month. The dry areas will come back quickly when the fall rains return, especially if you have watered them a few times during the summer.

Focus on giving non-native shrubs and trees an occasional deep soaking. One or two deep soaks a month is sufficient. Native trees like Oak and Madrone can tolerate a dry summer so unless your trees are new seedlings, turn off the water to them.

If you have rare or very expensive new trees and shrubs,

know their moisture needs and take care of them.

Use mulches throughout your landscape to reduce the amount of evaporation and to keep the soil cooler. Compost like mulches can improve the soil moisture holding capacity too. Keep surface mulch layers less than 3 inches thick and loose to allow good moisture infiltration.

If mulches like Douglas fir bark are too thick and allowed to dry out, they can repel water making late summer very stressful for your plants. If you think that is happening in your landscape just use a rigid steel rake to break up the mulch layer to allow the water to infiltrate.

Another way to use less water is to improve the efficiency of your irrigation by applying only what the target plants

need. When irrigating, water lawns to about 3-4 inches deep, flowers and vegetables to about 12 inches deep, shrubs 12-15 inches deep and trees to 24-30 inches deep.

Lawns, flowers and vegetables will require a maximum of two applications per week, shrubs and trees two applications per month during the hot summer season.

Watering during cool morning hours and using drip irrigation or soaker hoses when possible will also improve your application efficiency.

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