

Water Conservation In Your Landscape

Have you ever wondered if you are giving your trees, plants and grass enough water? In many cases, either too much water is being applied or not enough. With the significance of water conservation, it's important that we all continue to make adjustments when it comes to irrigating our landscapes and gardens. Lawns or turf grass are where people apply the most water, and it's not always applied at the correct rate and amounts. I tend to see grass over-irrigated which is not only a waste of water, but tends to negatively impact other plant material, such as trees. In the Aberdeen area, we have heavy, clay based soils, especially in newer neighborhoods, where soils are highly compacted with very little organic matter. This basically means our soils don't drain well and can hold a lot of water. It's important that you know what kind of irrigation system you have and how much water is being applied per hour. A good way to monitor how much moisture you have in your soil is to use a probe of some type, such as a long screwdriver. The top 6 inches of soil should be moistened after each irrigation cycle. After that, use your probe to determine when and how much water should be applied at the next irrigation cycle.

Healthy growing trees also require consistent moisture, including the younger ones. Trees that have been planted in the last 2-4 years must have consistent moisture to establish a healthy, productive root system. Using a probe is again the best way to monitor whether or not you need to adjust the amount of water being applied. Check the tree every few days by lightly digging down 6-10 inches to see what soil conditions are like. It shouldn't be muddy, and it shouldn't be completely dry. Use this method to ensure you are getting enough water to the root zone. Using a light layer (2-3 inches) of woodchips or organic mulch also helps conserve moisture.

In some cases, choosing a more drought resistant grass, tree or plant can help with water conservation. Many times, over half the water we use during the growing season is applied outdoors.

Feel free to contact me with questions anytime at 626-7015 or aaron.kiesz@aberdeen.sd.us

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