



For immediate release:
Monday, July 21, 2008

Contact: Jerome Hand
(334) 260-4500

ADEM Promotes Smart Irrigation

MONTGOMERY—July is “Smart Irrigation Month” and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management is urging everyone to water wisely.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, more than 50 percent of the water used to irrigate lawns and gardens is not utilized efficiently. For the average homeowner, this inefficient use of water over a one year period is enough to fill three backyard swimming pools. Therefore, ADEM is offering information that Alabamians can utilize to water more efficiently and to help conserve this precious resource.

Here are five easy tips to help conserve water and save money while irrigating lawns and gardens:

Water When Needed, as Needed

It’s estimated that half of landscape water use goes to waste due to evaporation, wind, or over-watering. Water your lawn or garden in the early morning when winds are calm and temperatures are cool. As you water, make sure to saturate the root zones and then let the soil dry. Watering too much and too frequently can result in shallow roots and disease.

Give Your Watering Methods a Tune-Up

Whether you water with a conventional sprinkler or an automatic system, make sure you position your sprinkler heads properly. Are you watering more pavement than lawn? Keep in mind that different areas of your landscape have different moisture needs. To avoid unnecessary water loss inspect your hoses, connections, and sprinklers regularly checking for leaks, broken heads, or other problems.

Do More with Less

Consider using “micro irrigation” for watering plants and garden beds, as well as trees and shrubs. Micro irrigation includes drip, microspray jets, or bubbler-style watering systems. Drip irrigation systems use 20 to 50 percent less water than conventional sprinkler systems by delivering a low-volume of water slowly. This minimizes evaporation, runoff, and overspray.

Look For “Smart” Technologies

Soil moisture sensors and weather-based controllers take the guess work out of water-efficient irrigation. These devices automatically adjust your irrigation schedule based on soil moisture or weather conditions so your landscape gets only what it needs when it needs it. On a moderate-size lawn, this can save up to 37 gallons of water per day. For another inexpensive option, install a rain shut-off switch. Required by law in many states, this sensor will turn off your sprinklers in rainy weather and can be retrofitted to almost any system.

Reduce Demand

Use native plants in your landscape. They require less care and water than ornamental varieties. Using native plants that are adapted to your climate require less watering and can reduce outdoor water use dramatically. In addition, using mulch around shrubs and garden plants can reduce evaporation from the soil surface and cut down on weed growth. To improve water efficiency in your lawn, aerate the lawn periodically to encourage the movement of water to the root zone. Also, raise your lawn mower cutting height, as longer grass blades help shade each other, reducing evaporation and weed growth.

#

adem.alabama.gov