

# Water-Smart Landscaping Tips



**Mow at 3"** The roots of turf-grass will grow deeper if you mow at 3"+ (and shallower / weaker if you mow short). Deeper roots help make the lawn more drought-tolerant, and reduce compaction. 3" tall & thicker lawns choke out dandelions and other weeds. Use a sharp mulching blade for a healthier lawn, and keep an extra blade on hand.

**Aerate ("Core-Plug")** to break up shallow soil compaction (< 3") within existing lawn areas, helping water to soak into the soil. Soil plugs that are pulled out by the self-propelled aerator will break down quickly. Contractors typically charge \$75. Best in Fall, w/ moist soils.

## 'Core-Plug' Lawn Aerator

Available through:  
- Lawn Service  
- Equipment Rental



Best Time:  
1) Sept 1 – 30  
2) May 1 – June 15

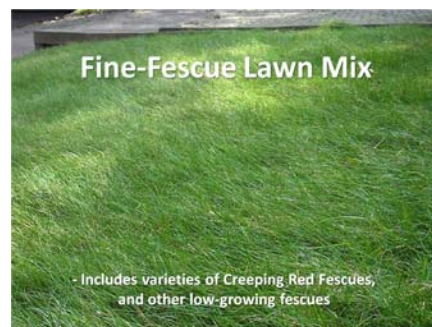


**Important:**  
Pre-Locate & Flag  
shallow buried wires or  
irrigation heads



**"Top-Dress" with Compost** after aeration to help build healthy soils for the lawn by adding crucial organic matter. Use local "well-aged" leaf compost. Apply 1/4" - 1/2" in the fall (and over-seed with drought-tolerant grass seed). Well-aged compost is locally available. Send in a soil sample to the University of Minnesota Soil Testing Lab to see if you need to add Organic Matter (compost) and if your lawn is deficient with any nutrients. See: <http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu>

**Fine-Fescue Lawns** have deeper roots (up to 9") than typical lawn grass (typically 1-3"). Deeper roots make the lawn more drought-tolerant. Fescues' dense growth crowds out weeds. You can over-seed into existing lawns or start from scratch (better). Fescues do especially well in many situations, **but**... they don't do well with heavy foot-traffic and compacted soils. Seeding of fine-fescues is best done in fall— cool fall temps and fall rains help the seed germinate quickly, but with little weed competition. One source: [www.prairienursery.com](http://www.prairienursery.com)—"No Mow"



- **Avoid mowing during droughts and keep the mowing blade very sharp** (prevent un-needed moisture loss/stress)
- **Check Soil-Compaction severity & depths to determine need for aeration.** Use a wire-flag (when the soil is moist, but not too wet or too dry)
- **Prepare the soil when starting a new lawn from scratch, by loosening compaction and adding compost.** It will pay off immensely in the future (and will be the envy of your neighborhood, with less work).

# Water-Smart Landscaping Tips



**Don't Water the Road:** Adjust spray heads to water your lawn—not the street, driveway or sidewalks. For hard-to-water areas, consider planting something else (like a drought-tolerant groundcover, such as Sedum, Yarrow, or fine-fescue grasses),



**Don't Water in the Rain:** Rain-Sensors send a signal to the irrigation-timer box to let it know that its raining. These sensors are available at hardware stores or online.



**Don't Water the Day After the Rain:** Soil-Moisture Sensors send a signal to the irrigation-timer box to let it know that the soil is still moist the day (or days) after a rain. These sensors are available online.

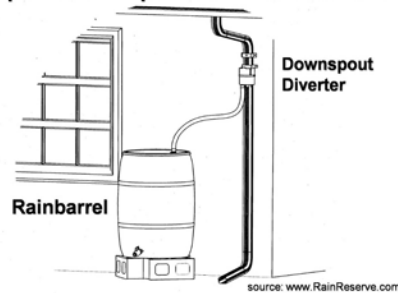
## Whatever you do:

- Avoid watering between 11am-4pm to reduce evaporation loss - water in early morning or evening in cooler temps.
- Avoid watering on windy days - to reduce water loss to evaporation.
- Use a Rain Gauge & Avoid over-watering - “typical” waterhog lawns need no more than 1”/week (and fine-fescues need much less).

**Fact:** When watering the lawn during the hottest part of the day (11am-4pm) you can lose 50% of irrigation water to evaporation.

**Fact:** Our treated drinking water, that is also used for lawn irrigation, comes from aquifers that are 400 to 1,000 feet below the earth's surface (and thousands of years old).

## Capture Downspout Water in Rainbarrels



**Collect Rainwater with Rainbarrels** to capture rainwater for the garden and house-plants (the best water for your plants). Recent innovations with ‘downspout diverters’, make capturing rainwater even easier and safer. Rainbarrels are sealed or have screens to prevent mosquito entry. Barrels typically hold 40-60 gallons.

Try to place your rainbarrel close to where you will need the water, for less work. Connect a seepage hose to the rainbarrel to water landscape beds or gardens, or use a watering can.