

10 Easy Ways to Reduce Your Outdoor Water Use

1. Adjust your sprinklers to avoid watering pavement and other things that don't grow.
2. Don't water when it's windy or raining.
3. Avoid daytime watering. It's best to water between midnight and sunrise.
4. Sprinklers are great for turfgrass, but use drip irrigation or soaker hoses on flowers, shrubs, gardens and trees.
5. Spread mulch around flowers, shrubs, trees and garden plants to retain soil moisture.
6. Don't plant grass on steep slopes.
7. Don't put grass in areas less than 10 feet wide.
8. Hand-water dry spots rather than over-watering the entire lawn.
9. Install a shutoff nozzle on your hose.
10. Xeriscape!



City of Albuquerque

Water Resources
505-768-3655



State Engineer Office

Water Conservation Program
505-827-3879



Cooperative Extension Service

Refer to the county government listings in your local telephone directory.

Suggested Reading

Natural By Design and Plants for Natural Gardens (a two-volume series) by Judith Phillips. Museum of New Mexico Press, P.O. Box 2087, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

Sunset Western Garden Book Kathleen N. Brenzel, Editor. Sunset Publishing Corporation, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Complete Guide to Gardening & Landscaping Time-Life Books, Inc., New York, N.Y.

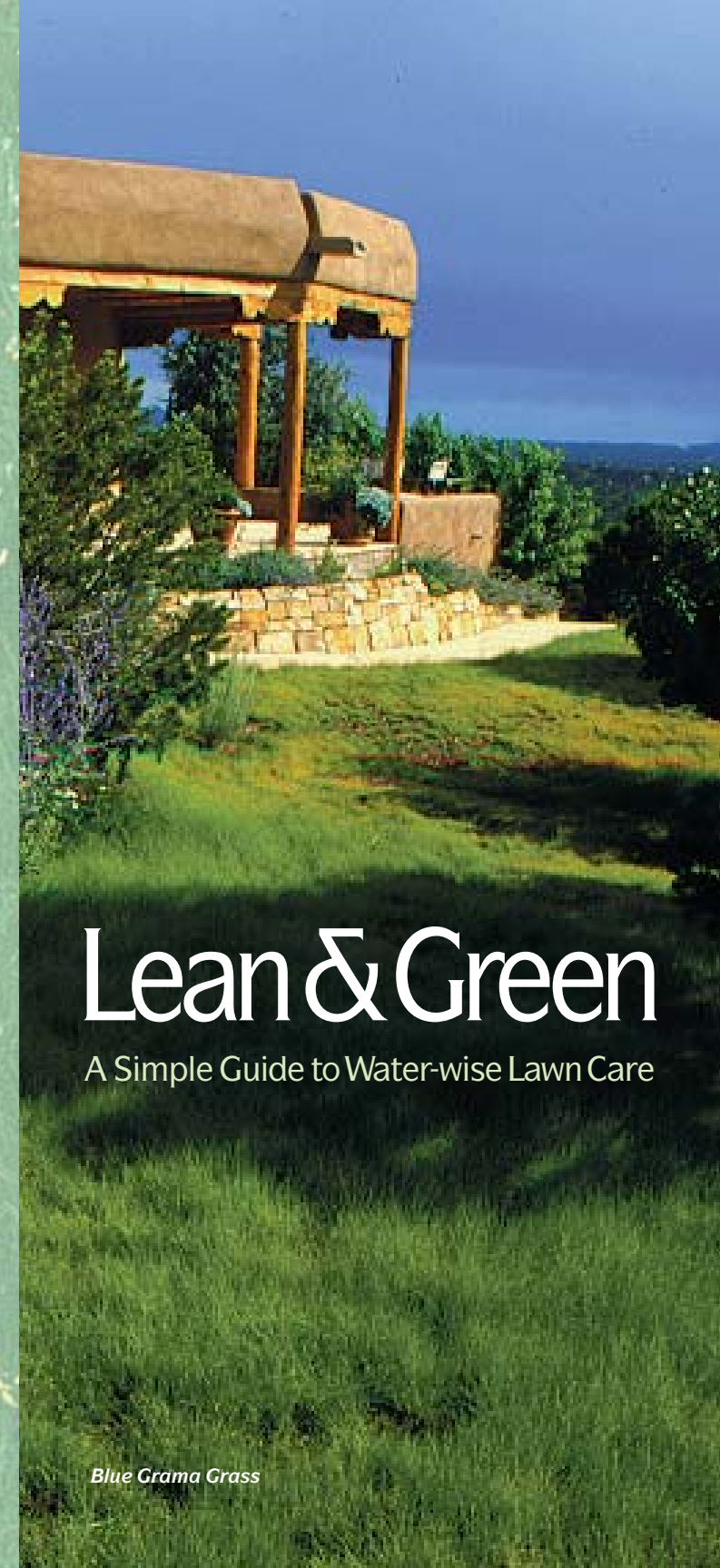
SAVE: The Homeowner's Guide to Using Water Wisely Tucson Water Conservation Office, P.O. Box 27210, Tucson, AZ 85726-7210

Water Efficient Landscape Guidelines by Richard Bennett and Michael Hazinski. American Water Works Association, 6666 West Quincy Avenue, Denver, CO 80235

All About Lawns Ortho Books, San Francisco, CA. Ordering Address: Solaris Group, Customer Service, 2527 Camino Ramon, Suite 200, San Ramon, CA 94583; 800-457-6900

Xeriscape Plant Guide Denver Water. Fulcrum Publishing, 350 Indiana St., Suite 350, Golden, CO 80401; 800-992-2908

Photography by Charles Mann



Lean & Green

A Simple Guide to Water-wise Lawn Care

Blue Grama Grass

Lawns Are Thirsty

Let's face it, most lawn grasses are not native to New Mexico. These grasses can't survive our hot, dry climate without significant additional water. Some lawn grasses require up to four times the water New Mexico receives from annual rainfall.

During the hotter summer months, over half of our water consumption occurs outside our homes—largely to water our lawns.

Believe it or not, some people actually give their lawns up to three times more water than is necessary for healthy growth and maintenance.

So, if you're planning a new landscape, consider a water-wise xeriscape (which can even include a drought-tolerant lawn). But if you have an existing thirsty lawn that you don't want to replace, use the tips in this brochure to water wisely.

Accept Less From Your Lawn

During the hottest months, cool season grass may not look its best. When conditions become more favorable, it will readily regenerate. Accept that your grass won't look perfect. (And try to reduce foot traffic on dry turf areas.)

Water-wise Grasses Warm-season grasses will be brown and dormant during the winter months, and green in the summer. Cool-season grasses are most vigorous in the spring and fall, and retain some color all year long. Instead of using grasses that need lots of supplemental water, consider drought-tolerant alternatives:



Buffalograss — A warm-season grass that needs less water than virtually all other lawns. It thrives in hot, sunny locations. Buffalograss is low-growing, so frequent mowing isn't necessary. It spreads by surface runners (stolons) and by seed. Buffalograss seed, plugs and sod are available at most nurseries.

Blue Grama — This warm-season grass, which is commonly mixed with buffalograss, makes a wonderful alternative to thirstier bluegrass. Its thin blades give a blue grama lawn a pleasing, fine texture. It's easy to establish and fills in quickly.



Bermuda — A deep-rooted, warm-season grass that uses about two-thirds as much water as bluegrass. Be cautious—bermuda grass is very invasive and may intrude on flower beds and other plants. It's green in summer, dormant and brown in the winter.

Tall Fescue — A deep-rooted, cool-season grass that needs less frequent watering than bluegrass, but still uses far more water than buffalograss or blue grama. Tall fescue is more tolerant of foot traffic and shade than bluegrass. It greens up early in the spring and stays green long into autumn.



Mowing Tips

1. Mow Early. Mowing when it's still cool reduces the stress on a lawn.
2. Mow Sharp. Dull mower blades tear the grass blades, creating unnecessary stress on the lawn.
3. Mow Higher. Longer grass blades promote deeper rooting and shade the plant's root zone, so the grass needs less water. A good rule of thumb: never cut off more than 1/3 of the leaf blade.

Recommended Mowing Height

Bermuda	1.5"
Bluegrass	2"
Buffalograss	3.5"
Tall Fescue	3.5"

The "Catch Can" Test!

Start by finding out how much water comes out of your sprinklers and how evenly the water is dispersed. Place six tin cans of equal size around the yard and turn your sprinklers on for 10 minutes. Check the depth of water collected in each can.

If each can has about the same amount of water, your sprinklers are delivering an even amount throughout your yard—and that's exactly what you want. However, if some areas are receiving more water than others, you may need to adjust or replace some or all of your sprinkler heads. (See the "Sprinkler Tips" section.)

Now pour all the water from the six cans into one can. Measure the depth of that water. The result is the "inches per hour" that your sprinkler system delivers.

Your local water utility or cooperative extension office can help you determine how much water *your* lawn needs.

Avoid Runoff By Cycling

Pop-up lawn sprinklers apply water at a rate of between one to five inches per hour. Most New Mexico soils can't absorb water as quickly as sprinklers apply it, resulting in wasteful runoff.

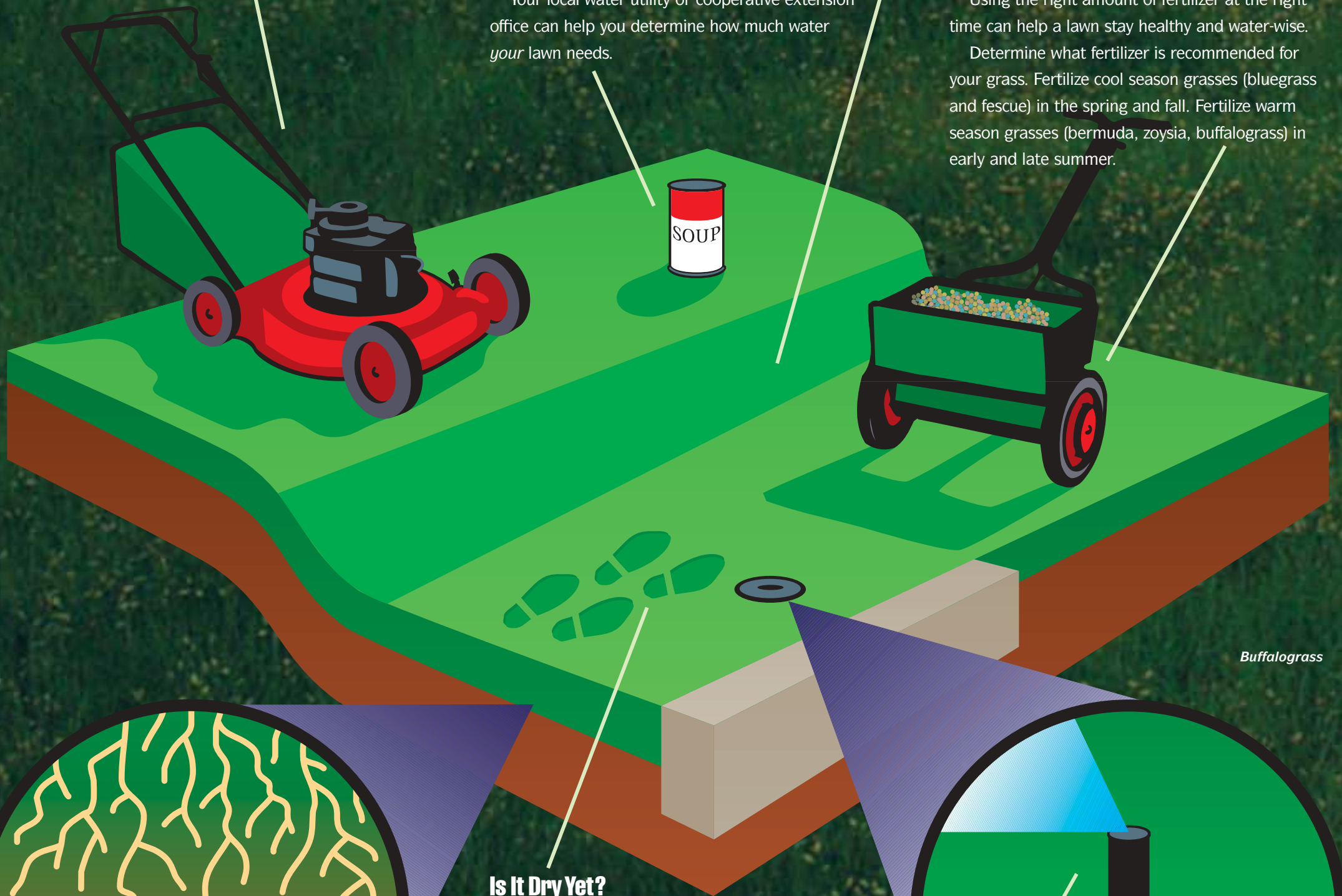
To reduce runoff, use the "cycling" method. Run your sprinklers for a short time, turn them off for 30-60 minutes, then repeat the process until you've applied the required amount of water. (Most automatic timers will allow you to do this.) The cycling method gives each dose of water a chance to reach the roots—where it does the most good.

In addition to cycling, water penetration can be enhanced by core aerating, dethatching and edging along hard surfaces.

Fertilize Properly

Using the right amount of fertilizer at the right time can help a lawn stay healthy and water-wise.

Determine what fertilizer is recommended for your grass. Fertilize cool season grasses (bluegrass and fescue) in the spring and fall. Fertilize warm season grasses (bermuda, zoysia, buffalograss) in early and late summer.



Is It Dry Yet?

Before you water your lawn, look for signs that your lawn needs water. Watch for grass blades that are curling up or turning a bluish-grey color.

Walk across your lawn. If grass springs up after being walked on, it doesn't need to be watered. Determine how many days your lawn can go between waterings—and don't water any more often than that!

Dig Those Roots

Dig out a small patch of your lawn to see how far down the roots grow. Most bluegrass roots are only three to six inches deep. Tall fescue, bermuda and native grasses can have roots 12 inches deep or more. Your soil type will also affect the depth of your lawn's roots. Generally, sandy or gravelly soils hold less water, and may require more frequent waterings of shorter duration. Heavy clay soils hold lots of water and may support plants with several days between waterings.

Plants can only use water their roots can reach. Don't water below the root zone—it's wasted water.

Sprinkler Tips

- Check your irrigation system regularly. Fix or replace broken or leaky sprinkler heads. Adjust tilted heads so they're vertical. Raise sprinkler heads so they're level with the ground surface.
- Fix clogged heads. Grit and debris can clog sprinkler heads, causing gaps in the spray pattern. Remove the nozzle, wash the grit screen and run the system briefly to flush.
- Move sprinkler heads at least 8 inches from hard surfaces. Placing sprinkler heads too close to pavement will result in unnecessary water waste.
- Make sure your sprinklers produce droplets, not mist. Water mist, caused by too much pres-

sure, tends to blow away in the wind.

- Use a low-angle spray to reduce wind-blown water waste.
- Use a timer to make sure your sprinklers come on at the perfect time for watering *and* shut off before you've over-watered! Adjust your timer monthly to compensate for changing weather.
- Override your timers when it's raining. Temporarily reduce or stop the watering schedule during cool or rainy weather.
- Don't mix and match equipment. Sprinklers, bubblers and drip systems should each be on different valves.