

# Kent County Water Authority

wise water use:

step into the future  today





## Introduction

Kent County Water Authority supplies water to Coventry, East Greenwich, Scituate, West Greenwich, West Warwick and limited areas of Cranston, Warwick and North Kingstown. It has some 26,700 customers, serving some 70,000 people. Water is supplied from connections to the Providence Water Supply Board and the City of Warwick systems, and from three Kent County Water Authority well fields.

Your voluntary water conservation efforts can help you save money, while helping us continue to provide dependable service to all our customers, and contribute to the growing economy of the cities and towns in which we live.

We've prepared this pamphlet to express the need for water conservation and to present several ways that you can easily adopt water conservation into your daily life. Water is a limited and precious resource. We must both protect and conserve it.

Kent County Water Authority recognizes the need to use water wisely and has introduced a number of programs over the past several years to promote water conservation and manage demand. We continue to strengthen our commitment to this important cause.

As a Kent County Water Authority customer, your role is the single most important factor in protecting and conserving our precious water resources.

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## The Need for Managing Demand

On an average day Kent County Water Authority customers consume some 10 million gallons of water. On hot summer days water use can nearly double!

When water demand exceeds capacity, our ability to supply critical water for fires and other emergencies is compromised. Each summer we have seen several days when water demand is at or exceeds our supply pumping capacity, resulting in a continued drop in storage tank levels.

The population and economy continues to expand in our service area, resulting in greater water demands. KCWA plans to meet those demands through a combination of promoting enhanced conservation practices and infrastructure improvements to our system.

Improvements are currently underway in our system to augment our capacity and help improve our ability to serve all of our customers. But even with this additional capacity, wise use of water is among the most important components of Kent County Water Authority's overall management strategy.

Our service area is growing with significant residential, commercial and industrial development. State and local officials believe this growth is important for Rhode Island's future. Therefore, Kent County Water Authority is working to provide water to these new customers for the overall benefit of our communities.

Kent County Water Authority spends millions of dollars annually to upgrade and expand our supply, distribution and storage infrastructure. These projects are paid for by our customers through the water rates.

This investment is necessary to support the future demands on your water system.

Successful water conservation efforts could potentially delay or eliminate the need for some facilities improvement projects. These potential savings would directly impact any future water rate adjustments.

## Water Conservation

Water resources throughout the state are limited.

Availability of safe and adequate supplies is among the top concerns for future economic growth in our state.

Wise use of water is a responsibility we all share. Some like to call it conservation, but it is actually more than that. It is changing usage habits to reduce the wasting of water and using water only when needed. When fully and faithfully practiced, it becomes routine and should have minimal impact on our daily lives.

Water savings are easily achieved by installing water efficient devices and by modifying our water use practices.

Kent County Water Authority believes everyone should participate in water saving efforts. We are taking the lead in our state to promote water conservation, efficient water use practices and awareness of the value of water.

Conservation will not only help us provide a safe and adequate water supply, but it will also result in significant immediate benefits to the consumer.

- It will assure that you provide the proper amount of water for your lawn and garden.
- You will save money on your water bill.
- The self satisfaction that you are doing your part to help preserve this precious resource.
- Heightened awareness to leaks to assist you in eliminating troublesome water leaks that you likely would not have discovered otherwise.

### **Water costs money...don't waste it!**

A dripping faucet or fixture can waste three gallons a day, which is 1,095 gallons a year. Check your faucets and toilets for leaks and repair them if they are leaky.

# Lawn Care and Landscaping Tips

During the summer months, households use at least half of their water through outside water use and lawn sprinkling. There are several things you can do to save water in this area:

**When to plant lawn** - The best time to plant grass is in the fall. The temperatures promote growth and watering requirements are significantly less.

**Grass selection** - Some turf grasses require more water than others to remain healthy. Select a native, drought-resistant, or low-water-use turf grass, such as fescue grasses.

**Plant trees** - Trees have several benefits. Evergreens can help block undesirable views and provide a wind-block. Deciduous trees reduce temperature (by as much as 20° F). Both types of trees help maintain moisture for nearby plants.

Reduce traditional grass lawns. Grass requires more water than other types of ground covers. Replace lawn with drought tolerant shrubs, perennials and ground covers. In wooded areas leave the site natural.

**Odd/even policy** - Kent County Water Authority's odd/even watering policy does not mean that you need to water your lawn every other day. Watering every other day can encourage shallow roots, disease and weaken plants. Use the guidelines below to determine when to water.

Depending on the weather, a good rule of thumb is to water approximately once every four to five days.

## Water grass only when needed

*This is perhaps one of the most important conservation measures you can take.* Your lawn needs only one inch of water a week to grow and remain healthy. Use a rain gauge to measure weekly rainfall and apply only the amount of extra water needed. For example, if there is a half inch of rain then only a half inch of watering is needed. *Remember grass will go dormant with hot weather. Excessive watering won't change this natural occurrence. It is normal and natural for grass to experience these dormant cycles.*

Avoid watering during hot, windy parts of the day to reduce evaporation loss. Early morning is best as wet plant foliage during evening hours can increase susceptibility to fungal disease.

**Quick tip** - *Step on your lawn. If the grass springs back there is no need to water. If it lies flat or shows your shoe imprint, then water according to the guidelines described in this brochure.*

**Limit fertilizer use** - Fertilizer increases the grasses thirst for water, and excessive fertilization can be harmful to the environment. Minimize fertilizer use and select only the best products. High organic fertilizers last longer and don't over feed the lawn.

**Natural runoff** - Use natural runoff to assist in irrigation. Water from downspouts, patios or valleys in your lawn can be directed toward plants that require more water or can be retained on the lawn for utilization. Consider using rain barrels to collect water from downspouts, which can later be used for watering plants and flowers. Drip or soaker hose systems can also connect to rain barrels.

The hotter the weather gets, the longer you should let the grass grow. Maintain your lawn at three to four inches in length during the summer heat.

**Soil preparation** - Prepare your soil properly. Deep cultivation with lots of organic matter, such as compost, leaf mold and peat moss will enrich the soil naturally and hold large quantities of water for proper growth of the root system and plants. One to two inches tilled into the soil annually works very well.

**Using mulch** - Use of mulch around plantings helps reduce evaporation and maintains moisture, limits heat stress, and discourages weed growth. There are several varieties of mulches available, including both organic (bark and wood chips) or inorganic (rock and gravel) types.

**Operate sprinklers properly** - Measure how much water your sprinkler delivers in 30 minutes by placing a shallow pan on the lawn to catch the water. Then adjust the flow rate or running time so you do not over water. Turn off automatic sprinklers when they're not needed. Position sprinklers so they water the grass not the pavement. Program them so they do not run every day. Installation of a rain sensor is required by our regulations and will assure your sprinklers do not run during rain.

For more information visit the URI Healthy Landscapes Program website [www.healthylandscapes.org](http://www.healthylandscapes.org) or call (401) 874-5398.



## Water-Wise Tips for Outdoors

- Do not leave hoses running while watering or washing; install automatic shutoff nozzles.
- Set sprinklers so they do not water driveways, sidewalks or paved areas.
- Sweep or use a blower to clean driveways, walkways and patios.
- Water in the early morning (before 10 a.m.).
- Do not water after grass goes dormant (brown). Dormancy is part of the natural life cycle of grass.
- Do not water during or immediately after rain storms.
- Regularly check your hoses and sprinkler system for leaks.
- Take note of where the sun and shade is on your property.
- Also note areas that may be wetter or drier naturally.
- Select plants that are native to your area.
- Select drought-tolerant species. These plants will require less maintenance and less water.
- Add organic matter to soil, such as compost and other nutrients.
- Add two to four inches of mulch.
- Use a drip irrigation system for watering shrubs/beds (instead of sprinklers). Better yet, native species don't require watering.

Plants and shrubs add interesting visual elements to your landscape. By reducing the amount of grass, you afford yourself some conservation wise landscaping opportunities, while requiring less water than grass. It is important that plantings are suitable to their location, both on your property and geographically.

Visit URI's cooperative extension website [www.uri.edu/ce](http://www.uri.edu/ce) to view a list of sustainable plants for this region.

Water when grass and plants need it, rather than on a set schedule.

## Appliances, Devices and Fixtures

Many appliances, devices and water fixtures are manufactured with water efficiency in mind. When you remodel or replace an appliance or fixture, consider the different types of replacement devices available. Once they are installed you will save water and money, without even thinking about it.

**1.6 gallon per flush toilet** - The toilet is perhaps the largest water user in your house. Today's toilets use 1.6 gallons per flush or less. Toilets installed between 1980 and 1994 use between 3.5-5.0 gallons per flush. Those installed before 1950 use seven gallons per flush. If your toilets were installed before 1994 consider replacing them.

**High-efficiency clothes washers** - These washers use 27 gallons per load or less. Older washers may use up to 56 gallons per load. If replacing your old washer is not an option, you can still save water by only washing full loads or by using the appropriate settings for different size loads.

**Water-efficient dishwashers** - These dishwashers use seven gallons per load or less. Older dishwashers may use up to 14 gallons per load. If replacing your old dishwasher is not an option, you can still save water by only washing full loads and by using the water conserving setting.



**Low-flow shower head** - All shower heads sold since 1994 are designed to deliver 2.5 gallons/minute.

**Low-flow faucets and faucet aerators** - Newer faucets are designed to deliver a maximum of 2.5 gallons per minute. Older faucets can be retrofitted easily and inexpensively by installing low-flow faucet aerators, which are designed to deliver 2.2 gallons per minute.

**Automatic hose shutoff for outdoor hoses** - Inexpensive devices available in a variety of styles.

**Kent County Water Authority Conservation Kit** - To help get you started, Kent County Water Authority offers a free water saving kit to our residential customers. The kit includes a low flow shower head, faucet aerators and toilet leak detection tablets. Stop in and pick one up.

When you replace an appliance, replace it with a water efficient model you'll save money and water effortlessly.

## In-ground Sprinklers

The Kent County Water Authority's policy is to discourage use of landscape irrigation systems because of the depleting effect these systems have on the public water supply.

If designed and used correctly however, in-ground sprinklers can be water efficient. Unfortunately, many systems are not set up properly and some owners may think they need to water more often than absolutely necessary. In some cases unfamiliarity with system controls does not allow for setting the system for maximum efficiency. The result is wasted water and excessively high bills.

The following general guidelines can help make your sprinkler system operate more efficiently:

Don't water during the rain or when soil is already saturated install a rain sensor and soil moisture sensor.

- Use proper sprinkler heads for application.
- Make sure the system delivers water evenly.
- Know how to program the system and how to use its manual mode.
- Adjust spray heads so paved areas are not watered.
- Use a rain sensor so the system does not turn on when it is raining.
- Use a soil moisture sensor so the system does not turn on if the soil is sufficiently saturated.
- Use sprinklers when grass needs it and not on a set schedule.
- Water at the correct time of the day – early morning before 10 a.m.
- Do not overwater. Use a rain gauge and strive for one inch of water per week (rainfall + irrigation = 1 inch/week).
- Sprinklers are most appropriate for grass. Drip irrigation is preferable for plants and shrubs.
- Consider a “smart” controller that schedules irrigation based on weather conditions. For more information visit the Irrigation Association web site at [www.irrigation.org](http://www.irrigation.org).



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