

**Ask a Expert // How Can I
Keep My Landscape Looking
Lovely in the Heat?**



ASK AN EXPERT:
HOW CAN I KEEP
MY LANDSCAPE
LOOKING LOVELY
IN THE HEAT?

LIVE WELL UTAH

The heat is on, and many lawns are struggling. Consider these suggestions for keeping your landscapes and gardens healthy while also saving water.

Go easy on the watering.

In almost all circumstances, plants tolerate or prefer to have variations in soil moisture. This means that it is perfectly fine for soil to dry out moderately between irrigations. Soil that is kept overly wet reduces vigor and can actually harm plants.

Watch for the signs before watering.

Do not rely on a sprinkler clock or irrigation controller to irrigate lawns on a set schedule. Instead, determine when the lawn actually requires irrigation and manually activate the system as needed. A common sign of drought stress in turfgrass is grass blades not quickly springing back upright when walked on, leaving a trail of footprints in the lawn. Additionally, walking on a lawn barefoot can let you feel how dry the soil is. Relatively dry soil under the grass is hard, does not “give” when stepped on and is slightly uncomfortable to walk on. Wetter soil depresses a bit when weight is applied.

Choose the right time to water.

Do not water between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. During this period, up to 50 percent of water emitted from sprinklers is lost to evaporation. Instead, irrigate when the sun is down or low in the sky.

Spot-treat brown spots.

Small areas of the lawn can brown during hot weather because of variations and inefficiencies in sprinkling systems. Instead of increasing the amount of time the entire sprinkling system irrigates, supplement water to the brown areas with a small hose-end lawn sprinkler or water by hand with a hose.

Don't cut the lawn too short.

Mow the lawn to a height of at least 2 inches. This allows roots to penetrate deeper into the soil and increases overall drought hardiness.

Go deep.

When irrigating turf, water long enough for the water to penetrate 6 to 12 inches into the soil. This encourages deeper root development and reduces the frequency of required irrigations.

Adjust watering based on sun exposure.

Irrigate shady and sunny areas according to need. Shady areas require much less irrigation than sunnier areas.

Mulch your beds.

Cover bare soil in the garden and flower beds with 2-3 inches of mulch. Not only does this save water, it greatly reduces the need for weeding. Inexpensive mulch can be obtained from many local green waste recycling centers. Grass clippings also work well and are free.

Hand water or use drip irrigation for flower and garden beds.

Hand-water or use drip irrigation to irrigate flowerbeds, vegetable gardens and shrub beds. Water should be placed near plants and penetrate the soil 6 inches deep for flowers and veggies, and 2 feet into the soil for established trees and shrubs.

This information was provided by Kelly Kopp, Utah State University Extension water conservation and turfgrass specialist, 435-757 6650, kelly.kopp@usu.edu and Taun Beddes, USU Extension horticulturist, 801-851 8460, taun.beddes@usu.edu