

TOP 5 TIPS!

For Winter Water-Wise Gardening

UCCE Master Gardeners of Orange County

"Most home owners could reduce their landscape irrigation by 50% without changing plants or anything and probably be OK," reflected UC Master Gardener and radio show host Kris Bonner on drought reduction information he received from his water district.

"I cut my minutes of irrigation in half... Overall, after two years, the yard didn't look much different from when it started."

Here are some habits you can cultivate to create your own reduced-water oasis like Kris's:



1

CHECK YOUR IRRIGATION EQUIPMENT REGULARLY.

Many irrigation systems can be set to run all stations briefly. Doing this after each mow – or at least once per month - will help you catch and repair damage quickly.

2

FIGURE OUT HOW LONG YOUR SPRINKLERS CAN RUN BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO SEE RUNOFF.

Never set your irrigation equipment to run for longer than this. It is more efficient to water more frequently than to water for longer durations.

3

ADJUST SPRINKLER SETTINGS DOWN IN COOLER MONTHS.

Even on clear days in December through March, your landscape will need just 1/3 of the water it gets in the hottest summer months of June and July. Scheduling irrigation systems to run in the morning will also reduce the amount of water lost to evaporation.

4

FILL IN LANDSCAPING GAPS WITH PLANTS DURING THE FALL AND WINTER MONTHS.

Younger, smaller plants are less expensive and more likely to develop resilient root systems when transplanted in the less stressful conditions of fall and winter. It can take up to two seasons for plants to establish and fill out, so plant now to support your plans for next summer and fall. When choosing plants, check the tags for those with medium or lower water requirements.

5

WHILE IN THE NURSERY, GET IN THE HABIT OF ADDING MULCH TO YOUR SHOPPING CART.

Select inorganic mulch like gravel for landscaping close to structures in fire-prone areas. A thick layer of organic or inorganic mulch not only saves you time weeding, it improves the efficiency of your irrigation system.