

Water Wisely: Healthy Plants, Healthy People, Healthy Planet



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA | EXTENSION

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<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/global/tag/irrigation/>

Presenting Issue

Water is a critical resource that is often taken for granted when it comes to horticultural landscapes. Over- and under watering often occur due to recommendations that are generalized and out-of-date. Individuals often know little about the relationship of water to plant health, the effect of soil type on plant water availability, and the need to adjust irrigation practices as climate change causes more intense rainfalls interspersed with longer periods of drought.

Water Wisely: To utilize water in horticultural landscapes in a responsible, thoughtful manner that maximizes plant health and minimizes negative impacts on water resources. Learn more: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/watering/>

Extension's Programmatic Response

Water Wisely: Healthy, Plants, Healthy People, Healthy Planet was developed in response to the need for Minnesotans to improve their watering practices and understand the impact of soil type on water availability to lawns, gardens, trees, and shrubs. Extension Master Gardeners (MG) attending face-to-face training sessions sign pledge forms committing to teach *Water Wisely* classes. To-date, 152 MG from 38 counties completed the *Water Wisely* educational session.

A comprehensive package of teaching materials was developed through focused collaboration of the Consumer Horticulture team and the Master Gardener State team. Additional educational resources were developed by Extension educators and included publications, blog postings, and webinars. *Water Wisely* was the first "public education theme" created for the Grow-U Education Program.

WATER WISELY MATERIALS

Teaching package: Press release for local promotion, facilitator's guide, 4 PPT presentations, speakers notes, handouts, hands-on activities, class evaluation form, record-keeping form, posters, brochure.

Other Water Wisely materials & events:

5 Extension publications; 13 Webinars; 10 Yard & Garden News blog posts; 5 Event presentations; 6 MG educational training sessions; 1 Press release; 5 Handouts; 1 WW landing webpage; 2 Newspaper / magazine articles;

GROW-U EDUCATION PROGRAM strives to enhance knowledge and advance skills; provide teaching tools in content areas related to horticulture, gardening, and sustainable landscape practices.; introduce research-based topics in the priority content areas; educate citizens across the state and beyond; healthier plants, healthier people, and a healthier planet. **LEARN MORE:** <https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/grow-u-program/>

Target Audiences

Educators: Extension Master Gardener volunteers, urban agriculture community leaders, other educators and community groups

Learners: Beginning gardeners, first-time homeowner, community gardeners, K-12 and college students, Arboretum Members, irrigation companies, arborists

Why Extension?

People see Extension as a valuable resource for horticulture information. Evidence of the credibility of our content is seen by the popularity of Extension Garden, the most accessed U of M Extension webpage with 8.4 million unique visits in 2016, 76% new visitors. This constitutes 55% of all visits to the Extension website and demonstrates how we are uniquely positioned to present *Water Wisely* content to help Minnesotans employ wise watering practices. The extensive network of MG volunteers provides face-to-face educational opportunities throughout the entire state.

Behavior / Action Outcomes

From June 2016 through April 2017, 383 people attended *Water Wisely* educational programs taught by trained Master Gardeners. All programs included soil science information. Depending on the event, MG taught one or more of the other modules as well (trees & shrubs, gardens, lawns). Attendees completed an evaluation and report knowledge gained and anticipated behavior changes.

REPORT KNOWLEDGE GAINED							
SOILS		TREES & SHRUBS		GARDENS		LAWNS	
%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
77%	294	36%	139	72%	274	31%	120
%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#

PLANNING ON CHANGING BEHAVIOR							
SOILS		TREES & SHRUBS		GARDENS		LAWNS	
%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
68%	259	16%	62	62%	239	22%	85
%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#

Broader Impacts

- Wiser watering resulting in water conservation
- Improved water quality
- Improved plant health and lifespan