



# Conserving Water Outdoors



NORTHWEST  
**WATER PLANNING**  
ALLIANCE

Metropolitan Planning Council

Sea Grant  
ILLINOIS - INDIANA

LAWN TO LAKE

Lawn watering and other outdoor water uses can account for 30 percent of Illinois home water usage throughout the summer, but only half of that water penetrates the soil, with the rest lost due to inefficient watering practices.

Reducing outdoor water waste in Illinois saves money and protects our limited water resources, especially during times of drought.

We can all take a few simple steps to use water more efficiently.

## Regional Water Supply Concerns

Water conservation is increasingly important in northeastern Illinois as rapid population growth continues. In Kane, DeKalb, McHenry, and Kendall Counties, population increased between 15 percent to over 25 percent between 2000-10. This growth is putting pressure on our rivers and depleting aquifers — layers of underground rock that contain groundwater — faster than they can recharge. In response to these pressures, the Northwest Water Planning Alliance was formed in 2010 to ensure a sustainable water supply.

*By understanding where our water comes from and our conservation needs, we can work together to create a sustainable water supply for future generations.*

## A Limited Resource

A majority of communities in the region rely upon groundwater for their water supply. Using groundwater faster than it can be replenished leads to water quality and supply issues. It is important to use our water resources efficiently.

Three components of water efficiency include:

- **Water conservation:** Using only the water we need.
- **Water-loss reduction:** Fixing leaky pipes in our homes and communities.
- **Water reuse:** Harvesting rainwater for our outdoor watering needs.



A sign displaying water restrictions posted in Huntley Illinois during the drought of 2012. Adoption of uniform watering restrictions among NWPA communities could go a long way toward protecting water supply. Image courtesy of Michael Smart, Sun-Times Media.

The Northwest Water Planning Alliance is doing its part to promote water conservation by encouraging member communities to adopt a regional, year-round lawn watering ordinance with drought provisions to protect our shared water supplies. You can do your part to save water and money by adopting these conservation practices.

## Create a Water-Wise Lawn

### Did you know...

Following natural lawn care steps can reduce the water requirements of your lawn by 30 percent to 50 percent.

#### • **3” Mowing height**

Raise the height setting on your mower to three inches or more for a healthy lawn.

#### • **Leave grass clippings**

Add nutrients to your soil by leaving grass clippings. It's a free source of fertilizer for your lawn.

#### • **Aerate**

Aerate your lawn in the fall to build soil health and promote moisture retention.

#### • **Water wisely**

Measure water received by your lawn with a rain gauge.

Water lawns no more than one inch per week, including rainfall (approximately two hours of watering per week).

Limit watering to mornings and evenings between 6:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Let your lawn go dormant in the summer or other dry periods.

#### • **Natural nutrients**

Don't over fertilize. Test your soil to determine proper fertilization requirements and opt for natural, slow-release fertilizers when needed.

#### • **Survey conditions**

Remove bare spots by over-seeding with new lawn seed and topdressing with compost.

## Absorb the Storm

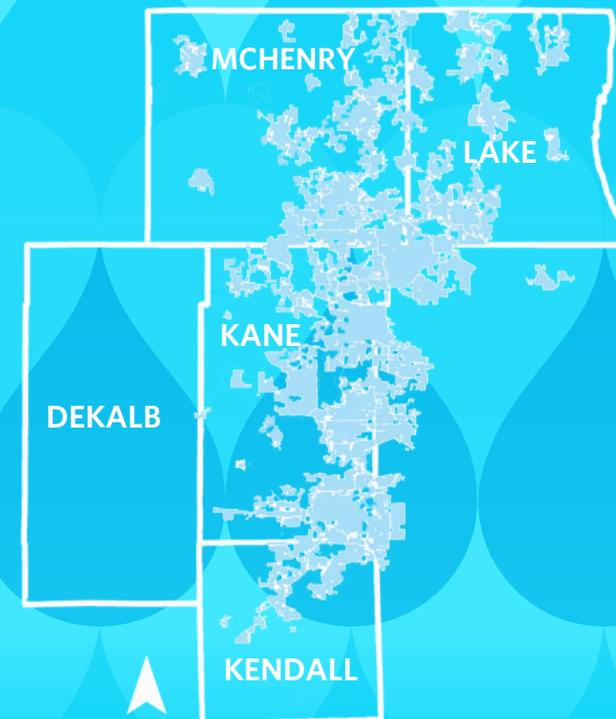
### Rain-Friendly Landscaping Tips

Follow these tips to get the most out of summer showers.

- **Plant a rain garden** using deep-rooted native plants to capture runoff from your driveway or rooftop.
- **Install rain barrels on downspouts** to capture and reuse rainwater. This will also reduce the amount of pollutants carried into waterways in stormwater runoff.
- **Minimize impervious** (hard-paved) surfaces. Consider using brick pavers, gravel, and other materials that allow water to soak into the ground.
- **Use native plants** and grasses for your property.
- **Group plants** plants with similar watering needs together.



A residential property rain garden during a 4-inch storm. Image courtesy of Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program.



## Northwest Water Planning Alliance

The NWPA, formed by intergovernmental agreements, seeks to collaboratively plan for and steward our shared river and groundwater resources to ensure a sustainable water supply for the people, economy, environment, and future generations. This group connects roughly 80 communities in DeKalb, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry Counties. NWPA communities are located within the same watershed and use shared water resources of groundwater, river or lake water, or a combination.

For more information, visit [www.nwpa.us](http://www.nwpa.us) or [www.lawntogreatlakes.org](http://www.lawntogreatlakes.org).



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NWPA lawn care manual!

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