




Utilities
electric · stormwater · wastewater · water
700 Wood Street
PO Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522
970.221.6700
970.221.6619 – fax
970.224.6003 – TDD
utilities@fcgov.com
fcgov.com/utilities

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 18, 2013

TO: Mayor and City Councilmembers

THRU: Darin Atteberry, City Manager 
Brian Janonis, Utilities General Manager

FROM: Donnie Dustin, P.E., Water Resources Manager
Lisa Rosintoski, Customer Connections Manager

RE: March 18, 2013 City Council Adjourned Meeting – Agenda Item #5 – First Reading of Ordinance No. 047, 2013, Enacting Water Rates Adjustments for the Water Supply Shortage Response Levels Established in the Water Supply Shortage Response Plan and Amending the Plan

There were a few questions and comments regarding the Water Supply Shortage Response Plan (WSSRP) at today's Council Leadership Team meeting, including making it clear what restriction levels water features can be on, explaining how trees can be watered and whether there will be water conservation kits provided as part of the restrictions. The following is a brief summary addressing these issues, which can be further addressed tonight.

Water Features

After much discussion among multiple City departments, there are suggested changes to the WSSRP for water features that are described in detail in the Agenda Item Summary. In short, water features are recommended to be allowed in Response Levels 1 and 2, but not allowed in Response Levels 3 and 4.

Watering Trees

All Response Levels allow for landscape watering of trees, shrub and gardens. In Response Levels 2, 3 and 4, landscape watering must be done by hose with a shut-off nozzle or low-volume efficient irrigation (e.g., drip system or soaker hose). Customers are allowed to water their trees and shrubs anytime they choose unless using a lawn sprinkler device. If using a lawn sprinkler device, or in-ground sprinkler system, customers may water trees and shrubs only on their assigned days and times. It would be difficult to enforce restrictions if sprinklers were allowed for trees on any day. For most landscapes, there should be ample time allowed at Response Level 1 to water both lawns and trees with typical lawn sprinklers. Attached is a draft April bill insert that will be sent to all customers which provides information on tree watering and other landscape care.

Water Conservation Kits

Utilities will provide free water conservation kits and shut-off nozzles for hoses once available. These items will be provided at certain events and available to customers at the front desk of the Utilities Service Center (700 Wood Street) and the Customer Service Center (117 North Mason).

LAWN CARE

Lawns that are healthy before restrictions likely will emerge in pretty good shape. Grass should do well with watering two days a week, but may become stressed if one day a week restrictions are necessary. There are a few actions you can take to help your grass survive.

Spring

- Core aerate when soil is moist to improve water penetration into clay soil.
- Water cool season grasses to promote root growth.
- Lightly apply a fertilizer containing mostly slow-release nitrogen.
- Consider applying an herbicide to reduce the potential for weeds if the grass becomes stressed.

Summer

- Mow a day after watering, either in the early morning or late evening.
- Mow to a height of 3 inches and often enough to remove only one third of the grass blade.
- Leave clippings on the lawn as they add nutrients to the grass.
- Limit the amount of traffic on the grass if it's stressed.

BROWN LAWNS

If your lawn becomes brown from lack of water, it may be dormant. Bluegrass, fine fescues, buffalograss and blue grama may remain dormant for months and emerge relatively well with cooler weather. Once tall fescue turns brown, it's most likely dead. Tony Koski, CSU Turf Specialist says, "Survival can be enhanced by watering 1/4 to 1/2 inch every 7 to 10 days."

SPRINKLER SYSTEMS

- Routinely check your sprinkler system for leaks, broken heads and other problems.
- Re-program your controller to the assigned watering days. Choose to water between 12:01 a.m. and 10 a.m. or 6 p.m. to midnight on your days. No watering 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Contact Utilities for help re-programming your controller or sign up for a free a sprinkler system audit.



Watering at night

WATERING TIMES

Set your sprinkler system to apply a total of 1/2 inch of water in two watering cycles. Apply 1/4 inch, wait an hour to let the water soak in and apply a second cycle of 1/4 inch. To apply a 1/4 inch, run each zone according to the type of sprinkler head:

- Spray heads, 7–10 minutes
- Rotor heads, 15–22 minutes



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Water restrictions can be tough on landscaping. On April 1, the City of Fort Collins implemented Response Level 1 water restrictions due to fire-related water quality issues, persistent drought and low snowpack.

Response Level 1 restrictions limit lawn watering to two days per week. Our water supply situation will be monitored as will the need to adjust the response level. Response Level 2 limits lawn watering to one day a week, and Response Level 3 allows one day a week watering, but for a maximum of two hours a day.

Watering trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetable gardens is not restricted, but use drip irrigation or a hose with a shut-off nozzle. These areas may not be watered using your lawn's sprinkler system except on your assigned watering days.

TREE CARE

City Forester Tim Buchanan says, "When trees don't get enough water they become vulnerable to pests and diseases. Healthy trees provide cooling shade, purify the air and add beauty to our community."

- Water using a deep root fork or needle, soaker hose or soft spray wand to a depth of at least 12 inches. Saturate the soil from the trunk to the outer edges of the branches.
- Water trees up to 8 inches in diameter four times a month and larger trees twice a month.
- Apply organic mulch to a depth of 4 inches starting a few inches away from the trunk and going out 2–6 feet.
- Improve structure and tree health by pruning out dead and weakened branches.
- Monitor for pests and other maintenance needs.

Contact an arborist, landscape professional or nursery with questions about tree care.

SHRUB CARE

Most shrubs don't need a lot of extra water unless the weather has been exceptionally hot and dry.

- Use drip irrigation or a soaker hose to apply water slowly.
- Add 4 inches of mulch to planting beds to reduce evaporation.
- Prune dead or diseased branches.

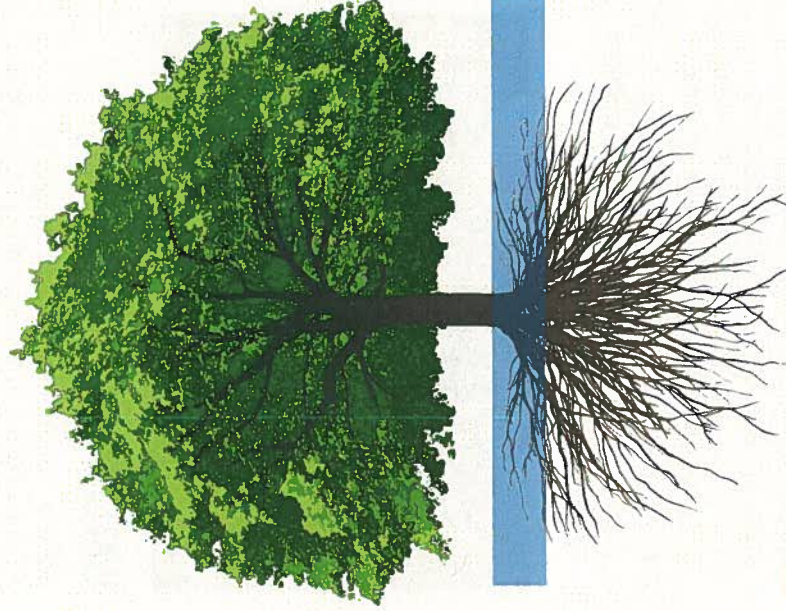


PERENNIAL and ANNUAL FLOWERS

- Choose drought tolerant perennials and annuals for your garden and containers.
- Apply 1–3 inches of organic mulch or pea gravel between plants to reduce evaporation and control weeds.
- Use slow-release and organic fertilizers. Synthetic fertilizers promote lush growth and more water use.
- Use drip irrigation or a soaker hose to apply water slowly.

VEGETABLE Gardens

- Add high-quality compost a month before planting.
- Mulch around vegetables with straw, shredded leaves or grass clippings.
- Water plants frequently as they emerge, but with only a little water.
- Water close to the plant's roots. Watering the leaves makes them susceptible to disease.



Watering Zone

Water at least 12 inches deep and to the edge of the branches.