

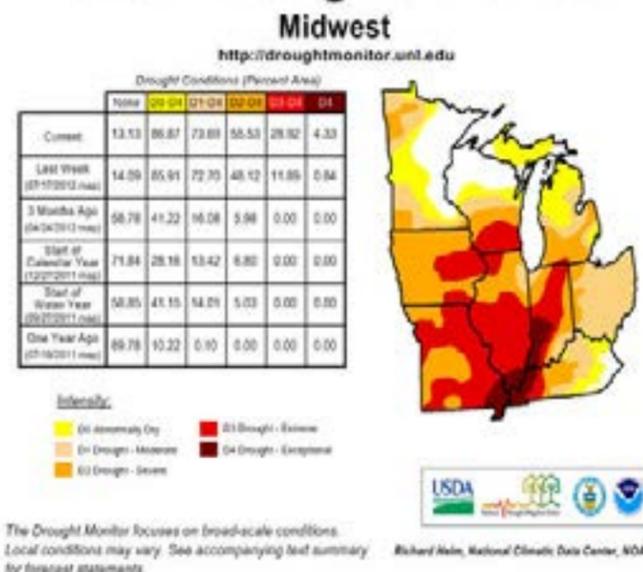
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best to allow it to go fully dormant unless you do not mind a higher water bill.

How much water is necessary to keep everything looking great? When the temperatures are averaging below 90 degrees, about 1 inch a week is sufficient. However, when temperatures are averaging above 90 degrees 2-3 inches per week will be necessary to keep plants, turf, trees, and shrubs looking good. Using mulch in your landscape beds will help retain moisture. Watering after 5PM, or in the early morning will ensure the least amount of evaporation (highest efficiency).

It's tough to keep up with watering during a drought, but the more you water, the more your plants will thank you.

U.S. Drought Monitor



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William Quinn & Sons Newsletter

Summer 2012

THE SUMMER HEATWAVE

This season's newsletter was delayed slightly because of the weather. We were hoping to have a complete turn-around where all articles regarding drought, plant stress, and watering tips would be irrelevant. It sure hasn't turned out that way this year, with over 60% of the country currently experiencing a mild to severe drought. Now that we're in a record breaking string of abnormally dry weather, it's time to discuss proper care for plants, trees, and turf during this year of the drought.

Although most plants show different signs of stress, most will wilt when the weather becomes arid. Wilt is a condition that occurs when the water loss from the plant's leaves is greater than the uptake of the roots. Hydrangeas are a good example of plants that wilt regularly during the hot part of the day.

Trees and shrubs are less likely to wilt when showing signs of stress. They instead display a symptom we call "scorch." Scorch is identified by the browning of the leaves around the edges and also throughout the veins. The leaves will feel crisp to the touch.

When a tree goes into stress it makes a decision on how to preserve itself until the weather turns more favorable. Most of the time it will drop some or all of its leaves which helps lessen the water loss the tree experiences. Sometimes it will sacrifice an entire limb to reduce stress on the entire plant. The first limbs on the "chopping block" are usually the lowest and oldest. Smaller branches are less valuable to the plant than larger ones. This is why you'll see slight dieback during a drought season.

Another weird phenomenon can be seen on a few ornamental plants – premature fall coloring. The most susceptible to this is the Burning Bush. You'll also see it on certain varieties of maples, a few perennials, and most other plants that are used for their "fall color showing." And what about the brown lawns? They too are in self preservation mode. When lawns turn brown during a drought, they've gone dormant – the same stage the grass utilizes during the winter months. Being dormant is an ideal stage for our grass to remain during a drought unless extreme supplemental water is available (i.e. a very efficient, long running, no restriction sprinkler system). Once a lawn is in 50% dormancy (brown), it's probably **(Continued on Back Page...)**



LEAF SCORCH

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Cathy's Corner

Well, here we are half-way through another season. Boy has it been a challenge. The heat and drought stress has not only taken its toll on trees, plants, and turf, it has created almost unbearable working conditions for the crews. Last season we dealt with one of the wettest seasons in history. This year we're experiencing the complete opposite. As a result of the hot, dry weather, all signed landscape proposals requiring plant material has been put on hold. As soon as the weather pattern changes we will resume all new installs. I understand that many residents are eager to have their new landscaping completed. Watering has always been an issue with new landscaping; the problem seems to be that many believe that outside watering is someone else's responsibility. The frequent line I hear is "I bought this place so I didn't have to water", and I know that all homeowner board members have all heard that line before.

Please keep in mind the landscaping on your properties is most likely your association's largest expense. During this extreme weather it's important to take care of trees and shrubs first. They cost the most to replace. No one wants to lose a well established shade tree due to lack of water. As far as shrubs, evergreens are also costly to replace. Many think that established evergreens can handle drought stress; no evergreen can withstand long term water deficiencies. Deciduous shrubs are next on the list of priorities. Turf falls to the bottom of the list as it should recover when the weather changes. It is too soon to tell what to expect in the long term in regards to this summer's weather. I hope we don't experience what we did in 2005. It's a wait and see what's next game.

I would like to thank all of you who have been so generous to your maintenance crews during the hot weather. The bottles of water and pop mean a lot to the maintenance crews. On really hot days, we have either ice cream or Popsicle parties when the crews return at the end of the day. In a typical year we might do it 2 or 3 times throughout the season. This year I've lost count, as it is a fun way to end the day, everyone's had enough of the hot weather.

As always, we appreciate your business and the trust you have in our company.

Cathy

The Spray Front

With the current drought not showing any signs of relief in the near future, we've been experiencing some fairly unique problems in our landscapes. Early emergence of bugs, breakdowns in our crabgrass preventers, and a stubborn weed population are just a few of the difficulties this year.

When temperatures reach above 85 degrees, or when the humidity is very high, we cannot spray weeds in the lawn. The chemicals become ineffective and pose a very high risk of burning the grass surrounding the weed(s). Unfortunately we've been experiencing weekly averages above 90 degrees for quite some time now. This not only thins out the grass and allows weeds to creep in, but also makes their treatments in the lawn very difficult.

We've also been seeing early emergence of various bugs in our landscape. Japanese beetles, bagworms, and mites are a few of the pests chewing away at our plants. The same rule of temperature applies when spraying trees and shrubs because the possibility of scorching the leaves is very high. This means we've been limited to spraying primarily in the morning hours.

Finally we may see an increased amount of grub activity in irrigated lawns this year. When beetles lay their eggs, they have to burrow into the ground. It's easier to get into moist soil than it is dry soil. Communities with sprinklers should be on the look-out for grubs this year as the low rainfall means their lawns look very appetizing for beetle reproduction.

Proper Watering Techniques During a Drought

It's no secret that we're experiencing a record drought this year. With the weekly chance of rainfall mimicking the odds of winning the lottery, it's important to maintain your landscape by properly watering. Gardeners face a tough choice during a drought as to when, where, and how long to water.

If your lawn is already dormant and brown, it's best to leave it dormant until the temperatures cool off. Bringing a lawn in-and-out of dormancy stresses the turf and opens it up to disease, bugs, and weeds. If, however, you have maintained watering prior to the hot temperatures and the grass is still green, continue watering! During normal 85 degree average weeks lawns need around 1 inch of water weekly to stay green. When weekly temperatures average above 90 degrees, lawns will need 2 inches of water or more.

A brown lawn does not mean that it is dead. Rather the lawn has gone dormant – such as it does in the winter. The lawn can remain dormant almost indefinitely, but it will need at least an inch or two of water every two to three weeks to keep it from dying. We usually get that amount of rain every few weeks, but if mother nature falls short it's recommended to turn your sprinkler on. A maintained dormant lawn should "spring" right back up in September when temperatures usually cool off.

Trees are a bit different. They are a longer term investment, and take a lot longer to re-establish should they die during a drought. Shade trees such as maples, elms, oaks, Honeylocusts can get by with an inch or two every two weeks. Fruit bearing trees such as crabapples and ornamental trees such as hydrangea trees, cherry trees, and lilac trees will need as much as 2 inches per week.

What's the best way to water an established tree? Run a hose to the trunk of the tree, and let the water "trickle" out for several hours. You're not using much water pressure, but the slow and constant stream of water will saturate the soil around the tree's dripline. Doing this one or two days a week will help keep your trees from perishing during the drought.

Soaker hoses are a great tool for landscapers, however they are hard to measure. Soaker hoses apply water directly to the soil around them (i.e. wrapped around plants, flowers, trees), do not wet the foliage (which reduces the risk of scorch), and most of the water does not evaporate. The best way to measure how much water your soaker hose is putting out is to allow it to run for 30 minutes to an hour. After it is finished, use a prodding tool such as a sharp stake, piece of conduit, or plant stake and push down as far as it will go. Remove the prod, and the wet soil should stick to it. You want at least 6 inches of soil to be moist (which equates to around an inch of water).

It's hard to maintain your landscape during a drought with watering restrictions, heat waves, and the humidity. Any effort that you can make to water will be well appreciated by your plants. Be safe this summer in your garden, and keep on watering!

