

# Key Drought Messages for Water Providers

- Water conservation measures implemented by the industry and water providers ARE working. For a large portion of the metro area, even though the population has steadily increased, water use remains at lower levels achieved after the 2002 drought. Two of the metro area's largest utilities are using 22% less water than they were prior to the 2002 drought and Aurora Water has reduced water use 36% since the early 2000s. The industry is interested in collaborating to see even more efficiencies.
- Landscape experts consider water allocations/water budgets and irrigation system efficiency the keys to reducing outdoor water use.
- Community education is vital—consumers need to understand how and why they must make substantial changes in their landscapes and their habits.
- Landscapes must be created with a purpose in mind, and they must be built to properly and efficiently serve the purpose.
- Water providers should be flexible in setting rules and guidelines. Mandating water savings can hurt those who are already efficient; if they are operating at peak efficiency, they won't be able to meet water savings goals.
- State and/or municipal mandates prohibiting landscape installations are the wrong solution to a nonexistent problem. Landscape renovations and installations are often completed to reduce water use through the planting of water-efficient plants and adding more hardscapes that reduce irrigated areas, saving water in the long term.
- Policies that eliminate outdoor water or prohibit the installation of landscapes or certain plants have consequences that far outweigh the benefits, including loss of jobs and state tax revenues as well as environmental and social consequences.
- GreenCO's Best Management developed in cooperation with Colorado State University, Denver Water, Northern Water Conservancy District, the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Wright Water Engineers, several other water utilities, and experts in our industry, have become the standard for outdoor water use and management via the Colorado Water Conservation Board, state law on new homes, and the Governor's office of Energy Management. Developed after the 2002 drought and updated in 2008, the BMPs are the basis of many municipal codes, state laws and state-mandated water conservation plans. The BMPs demonstrate that a beautiful healthy landscape and wise conservation are not mutually exclusive.
- The green industry and water providers should discourage people from abandoning their landscapes, which have significant economic, environmental, aesthetic and health and safety repercussions. The industry and water providers can help protect valuable



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landscapes and maintain the valuable environmental benefits they deliver by discouraging people from letting trees and yards die. With good planting practices, we can train plants to use less water and still be healthy and vigorous. Landscapes actually help conserve water by cooling the air thereby reducing air conditioning needs. Encourage people to protect the urban forests - Mature trees can take decades to replace and have immeasurable environmental benefits. People need information on how to keep trees alive in drought.

- The economic impacts of drought are felt by everyone: water providers, property owners and the green industry. Keeping landscapes alive and maintaining property values should be a priority.
- There are many strategies to reduce outdoor water use in addition to limiting days of week/times for water including:
  - Healthy soil is key to a sustainable landscape. Properly amended soils soak up water and prevent water run-off; mulch also prevents moisture loss.
  - Cities and municipalities should require soil amendment and inspect it, that is the first step in soil health and moisture retention.
  - Right plant, right place, right amount of water.
  - Use rain sensors and 'smart' irrigation controllers.
  - Watering plants correctly using right technologies: drip irrigation, microspray, pop-up sprays and rotors.
  - Water should be hitting the landscape and not streets or sidewalks.
- Encourage customers to watch their water consumption and adjust. Ten years ago, it was often quite difficult to see consumption on a regular basis. Many water providers were billing once a month or even once every two months. Now, in many locations, it's possible to see consumption much faster, which allows for better and quicker adjustment of irrigation systems. Having landscape pros help consumers and HOAs by regularly reviewing water bills and changing water schedules has made a big difference in consumption.
- Encouraging customers to focus on outdoor and indoor water savings will yield better results. Indoor water consumption happens every day for 12 months versus 6-7 months for outdoor water use. Indoor conservation is equally important.



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## Industry Resources

Let us be your subject matter experts and education partners on outdoor water conservation outreach. We are ready and eager to collaborate and partner in informing the public. We know the most about plants and are willing to share content with you.

### **GreenCO.org** | Water Conservation Page

Resources, fact sheets and reports on science-based water-saving strategies.

### **Sustainable Landscape Management Colorado (SLM)** | [www.alcc.com/slm](http://www.alcc.com/slm)

ALCC's SLM training and certificate program outlines sustainable landscape maintenance practices, why they are important and different from prior practices, anticipated outcome of proper techniques, and who will benefit from the application of these techniques and practices

### **ALCC Tip of the Week** | [www.alcc.com/tip-of-the-week-email](http://www.alcc.com/tip-of-the-week-email)

Weekly email that focuses on sustainable landscape practices and advice.

### **Landscape Colorado Facebook page** | [www.facebook.com/LandscapeinColorado](http://www.facebook.com/LandscapeinColorado)

Sustainable landscape tips and trends.

### **Plant Select®** | <https://plantselect.org> (find them on Facebook and Instagram, too)

More beauty, less water – Plant Select's goal is to create smart plant choices inspired for the Rocky Mountain Region.



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