

Lawn Watering FAQs

1. **What is the Water Shortage Response Plan?**

The City of New Westminster is part of Metro Vancouver's Water Shortage Response Plan (WSRP) established in 1993 to manage our drinking water supply during the hot and dry summer weather.

In 2004, the WSRP was updated in response to summer droughts, and these changes are now being reflected in most municipal bylaws. In 2011, to further reduce the impacts of outdoor water use on Metro Vancouver's distribution system, the Water Shortage Response Plan was amended to restrict lawn sprinkling to mornings as this is when the least amount of evaporation occurs. If persistent drought conditions continue or a sudden disruption in water supply develops from unforeseen circumstances, the WSRP could advance to further restrictive measures, in which watering and exterior washing is heavily restricted or banned.

The WSRP underwent an evaluation process that took place in two stages. First, some immediate amendments were made for the summer of 2016. Second, a broader restructuring of the WSRP took place in 2017. The two-phase review process accommodated timelines to amend and align related municipal bylaws.

2. **Why do we need regulations?**

Greater Vancouver experiences a lot of rainfall but most falls in autumn and winter seasons. Much of the rainfall and snowmelt in the watersheds cannot be captured for later use when dry weather arrives. Summer is when Greater Vancouver uses the most water (up to 60% more than during the rest of the year), receives the least amount of rainfall, and has the least amount of water in our reservoirs.

Watering regulations provide a fair system for water use throughout the Lower Mainland, while controlling summer water demand. By taking measures to conserve water throughout the summer, we can help to prevent more restrictive measures in the event of drought conditions.

3. **How much water do Metro Vancouver residents use?**

Residential water use accounts for more than half of total regional water consumption. On average, residential consumption is about 350 litres (about 77 gallons) per person per day. On a hot summer day, outdoor watering of lawns and gardens often causes consumption to double.

4. When can I water my lawn?

Lawn watering regulations are in effect annually from May 1 to October 15.

Under Stage 1 Restrictions:

- Residential addresses (includes townhomes and apartment buildings):
Even-numbered addresses: Wednesday, Saturday mornings from 4:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
Odd-numbered addresses: Thursday, Sunday mornings from 4:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
Watering trees, shrubs and flowers is permitted any day, from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m. if using a sprinkler, or any time if hand watering or using drip irrigation.
- Non-residential addresses
Even-numbered addresses: Monday mornings 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. and Friday mornings, 4 a.m. to 9 a.m.
Odd-numbered addresses: Tuesday mornings 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. and Friday mornings, 4 a.m. to 9 a.m.
Both Even and Odd addresses: Friday 4:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
Watering trees, shrubs and flowers is permitted any day, from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. if using a sprinkler, or any time if hand watering or using drip irrigation.

Combined mixed-use addresses (e.g. residential and commercial), follow “non-residential” watering times.

5. I just installed a new lawn; can I water it outside of the allowed days/times?

The City of New Westminster’s Engineering Department sells lawn watering permits for newly established lawns. Permits can be applied during Stage 1 and 2 restrictions. No exemption permits will be issued during Stage 3 restrictions; however, any permits issued under Stage 2 will remain valid under Stage 3. Please contact the Engineering Department at 604-527-4592.

6. If there is a total watering ban, will my lawn die?

Established lawns will go dormant and may turn brown during hot, dry spells. A good rainfall or cooler weather will help your lawn revive quickly. Watering lawns sparingly or not at all saves up to 17,000 litres per household over the summer months.

7. How do regulations apply to flower beds and gardens?

For residential homes, in Stages 1 and 2 of the WSRP, gardens, shrubs, trees and flower beds can be watered by hand at any time; however if using a sprinkler, they

can be done any day of the week between 4 am to 9am. Under Stage 3, watering of vegetation must be done by hand using containers or a hand-held hose equipped with a spring-loaded shut-off. Under Stage 4, all forms of watering using drinking water are prohibited.

The City of New Westminster encourages the use of rain barrels to help in garden irrigation. Residents can purchase rain barrels for \$75 at Engineering Operation's located at 901 First Street between the hours of 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Cash or Cheque only. Limit of one per household. To confirm availability, please contact Engineering Operations at 604-526- 4691.

8. What are some water-wise tips for the lawn?

Healthy lawns only need about 25 mm (1 inch) (depth of a tuna can) of water a week, which can easily be applied by watering once a week. Over watering can promote lawn disease and leach nutrients from the soil.

Watering early in the morning is best because less water is lost to evaporation. Use low release or natural fertilizers for long-lasting benefits. A healthy, vigorous lawn crowds out weeds and reduces pest damage. Consider natural alternatives to pesticides, herbicides and insecticides.

9. What are some water-wise tips for the garden?

Spread grass clippings or other mulch materials around the base of plants and shrubs. Applying organic matter (such as ground bark, sawdust or leaves) to soil increases its ability to hold water, and improves nutrient content. Mulch also prevents soil erosion and discourages the growth of weeds.

You can also plant water wise plants. By reducing lawn area or by incorporating drought-tolerant plants that need less water, gardeners can help conserve water during hot, dry summer months. Small, thick, grey or fuzzy leaves are all indicators of drought-hardy plants.

10. Do these restrictions apply to soaker hoses or in-ground sprinkler systems?

Yes. Any sprinkler system that is being used to irrigate a residential or commercial lawn (other than those exempted) or flower and vegetable garden is subject to these restrictions.

11. Can my kids still play in the sprinkler?

Yes, during allowed watering days/hours. If you run your sprinkler outside allowable days/times, you could be subject to a fine based on the current stage of the Water Shortage Response Plan.

Stage 1 - \$ 100.00
Stage 2 - \$ 200.00
Stage 3 - \$ 500.00
Stage 4 - \$1,000.00

For water activities for children, it is best to use a children's play pool instead of a sprinkler. Water from the play pool can be used to water the lawn or garden areas after use.

12. What about my car or boat -- can I wash them?

Under Stages 1 and 2 of the WSRP, vehicle washing is discouraged and must be done using a hand-held hose equipped with a spring-loaded shut-off (which saves up to 23 litres of water per minute). Using a bucket of water will also help to conserve water. During Stages 3 and 4, the outdoor washing of vehicles is prohibited, except for safety (windows, lights and licenses only).

Washing of vehicles may not be done on a paved or hard surface, and must be done on a gravel or grass surface to ensure wash water does not enter the City's storm sewer which drains directly to local creeks. Commercial car washes are also shut down in Stage 4. All vehicles should be washed on a gravel or grass surface to avoid soapy water from going down the storm sewer, which drain into local creeks. Allowing the hose to run continuously while you are washing your vehicle is not permitted.

13. Can I hose down my patio or other outdoor surfaces?

Exterior washing of any surface is discouraged under Stage 1. Under stages 2 and 3 of the WSRP, outdoor surface washing is only permitted for health and safety reasons, or to prepare a surface for painting or similar treatment. Washing for aesthetic purposes is prohibited under these stages.

Under stage 4, all washing is prohibited; these restrictions also apply to private and commercial pressure washing, except if allowed by order of a regulatory authority for health and safety reasons.

14. Why are parks and playing fields under fewer restrictions?

Under Stage 1& 2, parks and playing fields may be watered within the allowable watering times.

15. Why don't we just build another dam?

Using less water during this period of high water demand keeps taxes down by reducing or deferring system upgrades to the water supply infrastructure, including

dams, pipes and pumping stations. Construction of a new dam is costly. By being water wise, we can get a better understanding of our real water needs and help plan for future water facilities in Greater Vancouver.

16. I pay taxes, so why can't I sprinkle my lawn whenever I want?

Municipal water rates or fees are some of the lowest rates in any major urban centre in North America. The cost of building facilities so everyone can use all the water they want at any time would increase rates substantially. If we all use water efficiently, we can help keep costs down and New Westminster can spend tax dollars more efficiently.

17. Why doesn't every house have a water meter?

This would be costly to implement and we are not yet certain if savings would outweigh the costs. A study to determine this is underway and will provide more information.

18. What is Metro Vancouver's role in Sprinkling Regulations?

The Greater Vancouver Water District, a division of the Metro Vancouver, supplies drinking water to 18 Lower Mainland municipalities. It coordinates sprinkling regulations to ensure consistency and a sufficient supply of water.

The legal authority for the regulations is retained within the [Waterworks Bylaw](#).

19. In what other ways can I reduce water consumption?

Simply by trying to use less water, you will contribute to the water conservation solution. There are many strategies that can reduce consumption. Here are just a few:

- Purchase a rain barrel or water conservation kit from the City of New Westminster
- A spring loaded garden hose nozzle save 23 litres per minute
- Full loads and shorter cycles in the laundry room save 95 litres per load
- Low-flow toilets save six to 14 litres per flush
- Toilet inserts save up to 100 litres per day
- Aerator and flow restrictors on the kitchen tap save up to 20 litres

20. Where else can I get information on watering restrictions?

City of New Westminster Engineering Department
604-527-4592
engineering@newwest.ca

Metro Vancouver Information Centre

Phone: 604-432-6200

www.metrovancouver.org

Recycling Council of BC

Phone (lower mainland): 604-732-9253

Phone: (throughout BC) 1-800-667-4321

www.rcbc.bc.ca