



## **Cobb County Water System - Water Efficiency Program News - Summer 2015**

### **Water Conservation for Home Lawns**

By: Clint Waltz, Professor and Turfgrass Specialist, University of Georgia

Due to more “normal” rainfall the past several years many Georgians have likely forgotten the effects of the 2007 and 2008 drought. However, the news from California, and other western states, should remind us rainfall, and water, can be variable and the next drought is on the horizon. All living things need water to survive, albeit a different amount for different organisms. For plants, supplemental water from irrigation is sometimes needed between natural rainfall events. Fortunately, turfgrass is a fairly robust plant that needs relatively little water for survival.

Turfgrass adds beauty and value to any property and is one of the most versatile and functional plants in the landscape. It enhances the environment in ways that can be particularly important in urban areas. Turfgrass reduces soil erosion and surface runoff while recharging ground water, which results in more efficient use of rainfall. Turfgrass also absorbs dust and other air pollutants, produces oxygen, and provides area for outdoor activities.

Many factors influence the amount and frequency of water needed for turfgrass within a home lawn. Soil type, type of grass, fertility level, frequency of rain, temperature, wind, and humidity all affect the amount of water needed. A high level fertilization and hot, windy days tend to increase the demand for water, while low level fertilization and cool, cloudy days tend to decrease the demand for water.

Irrigation is one maintenance practice often done wrong. Light, frequent irrigations produce shallow, weak root systems. A shallow root system prevents efficient use of plant nutrients and soil moisture. The key to success is to condition the grass to require as little extra water as possible.

One way of conditioning the turfgrass to need less supplemental irrigation or, to remain green between periodic summer rain showers is to tolerate some moisture stress. An observable characteristic of moisture stress in turfgrass is wilt. Wilt is a physiological defense mechanism of the turfgrass plant and allowing some moisture stress actually triggers the plant to initiate rooting, allowing the turfgrass to explore a greater soil volume for water reserves.

Actually observing some wilt, or moisture stress, within the lawn prior to applying irrigation can be good and improve the sustainability of the grass. Daily irrigation of turfgrass produces short roots incapable of tolerating periodic drought stress. Most established turfgrasses in Georgia only need 1.0 inch of water per week. Irrigation should be applied to supplement rainfall.

*(Continued on Page 4)*

### **Upcoming Events**

For information or to schedule a presentation visit [www.cobbwater.org](http://www.cobbwater.org), email [waterefficiency@cobbcounty.org](mailto:waterefficiency@cobbcounty.org), or call the Water Efficiency Office at 770-419-6244

#### **Family Fun Safety Days**

Friday, July 10, 2015

**Time:** 9AM-12PM

**Where:** Cobb County's Safety Village

#### **Back to School Jam**

Saturday, July 25, 2015

**Time:** 10AM-4PM

**Where:** South Cobb Recreational Center

#### **Cobb Science Teacher Curriculum Days**

Wednesday, July 29, 2015

**Time:** 8AM-3:30PM

**Where:** Harrison High School and Cooper Middle School

#### **National Activities**

##### **July is Smart Irrigation Month**

The Irrigation Association has declared the month of July as *Smart Irrigation Month*. This is a great time to upgrade your controller or irrigation heads with new water efficient technology. For information on Smart irrigation upgrades contact the Water Efficiency Office.

## School Year Recap

During the 2014-15 school year, Water Efficiency staff provided free outreach education programs for over 8,000 students in Cobb County. With the addition of our new staff member, Gwen, we hope to reach even more in the next school year! Teachers can look for us at curriculum days during pre-planning next month to learn more about the programs we offer, or request a program list by emailing [waterefficiency@cobbcounty.org](mailto:waterefficiency@cobbcounty.org).

## Cool Waters Teacher Workshop

Recently Water Efficiency staff, along with other members of the Georgia Association of Water Professionals' Public Education Committee, facilitated the Cool Waters teacher workshop at GAWP headquarters in Marietta. We had a great group of teachers attending, including several from Cobb schools. During the workshop, teachers learned about the water and wastewater treatment processes and about water use and conservation in our region. Participants were able to tour a drinking water treatment plant and a wastewater treatment plant and take a scenic float down the Chattahoochee River. They also tried out a number of lessons from the Project WET curriculum and became certified Project WET educators so that they can use those lessons in their classrooms.



*Teachers from Cobb and other local counties learn to use the Project WET curriculum at the Cool Waters workshop*

## Summer Outreach

With our new staff, our new mascot Tappy Turtle, and the end of the school year, we have been able to make it out to several community events this summer. We met some great folks at the Cobb County Safety Village during Family Fun Safety Days and helped them understand the importance of clean, safe tap water and staying hydrated during summer activities. You can join us and lots of other exhibitors at the next Family Fun Safety Day on Friday, July 10th at the Cobb County Safety Village. We also had a great time at the **Back to the Chattahoochee River Race and Festival**. It's always great to get out and connect with our water sources and the people who rely on them. You can see photos from all these events on Tappy Turtle's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/slowtheflow>



*Members of Girl Scout Troop 2633 display the reusable water bottles they designed to help people conserve water and other resources. The girls handed out their bottles at the Mableton Day Festival.*

## Citizen Spotlight

At Mableton Day on May 16th, the Water Efficiency staff came across a group of young citizens who were out at the community fair educating their neighbors about water conservation. Members of Girl Scout Troop 2633 were providing visitors with reusable water bottles, which the girls had designed. We would like to commend these girls on their hard work and their passion for conserving our resources!



# Cobb's Water Efficiency Program Welcomes Tappy Turtle

Tappy is the new Water Efficiency Program Mascot. Tappy has both a Facebook and Twitter account where he educates citizens about the joys of tap water and how to conserve it. Tappy highlights the water efficiency program's: outreach events, waterSmart projects, and US EPA WaterSense initiatives. Follow Tappy to see what is new in the world of water efficiency and tap water. Don't miss "Turtle Tips Tuesday", "Whadda You Know about H2O Wednesday?", and "Water Facts Friday." Tappy is a character based program, that can enhance our presence in a more engaging and interactive way and help cross promote our front facing Cobb Water Social media.

**Project Tappy** is a new elementary school lesson. Cobb Schools can keep Tappy for a week. He will travel in his own backpack with water books, a USB for teachers to download photos of his visit, and instructions with suggested activities for the week that Tappy is with the class. Those pictures can be used on Tappy's social media sites. Tappy will also join Allatoona Ally in our annual coloring book contest. You can find and follow Tappy on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/slowtheflow> and on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/TappyTurtle>.

To engage a savvy social media audience the water efficiency program has ordered Tiny Tappy stress toys with his #SlowtheFlow. These will be used to promote special initiatives: Shower Better Month, Fix a Leak Week, and Sprinkler Spruce Up where customers can show Tiny Tappy in activities that Slow the Flow to save H2O. Tappy accompanies water efficiency staff to events posing with citizens and visitors as he helps to educate Cobb citizens about the value of water efficiency and tap water!



**Keep a Pitcher of Water in the Refrigerator** - instead of running the tap for cold drinks, so that every drop goes down you and not the drain!

**Use a Car Wash** - Car washes in Metro Atlanta are required to recycle water, which saves more water than home car washing. Home car washing also pollutes by sending soapy water down storm drains, where it is discharged directly into our waterways without being treated.

**Compost!** - Composting food wastes saves water by reducing the water needed to run a garbage disposal. You can also save by scraping plates into the trash instead of rinsing them.

**Cover that Pool** - Pool owners can use a cover to reduce water loss through evaporation. A pool cover can also save energy and reduce the need for chemicals.

**Water Your Lawn in the Early Morning:** Watering your lawn early in the morning can reduce evaporation up to 30 percent or more. The ground will be wet from dew and is more likely to absorb the water that is applied.

**Count every drop, and make every drop count! It's up to you!**

*Tappy Turtle lives at Cobb Water. He has a passion for tap water and conservation, and he loves meeting people and teaching them about the value of water.*

## ...Lawns continued

Apply enough water to wet the soil to a depth of 5-7 inches. This is usually equivalent to 1.0 inch of water. Do not apply water until runoff occurs. If water is being applied faster than the soil can absorb it, turn the irrigation off and allow the existing moisture to move into the soil, then apply the remaining irrigation to achieve 1.0 inch.

Prior to sunrise is the best time to water because of less wind and lower temperature. Research indicates water loss at night through evaporation may be 50 percent less than during midday irrigation. Studies also suggest that irrigating after dew develops will not increase disease problems. However, irrigating prior to dew formation or after the dew has dried from the morning sun and/or wind extends the period of free surface moisture and increases disease.

Proper turfgrass water management begins with improved water-use efficiency, through which, water conservation occurs. Simply put, water-use efficiency is limiting water waste and making effective use of applied water. Employing some best management practices (BMPs) like proper fertilization, tolerating some wilt, allowing water to move into the soil, and not watering during the heat of the day can conserve water and maintain healthy, attractive lawns.

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### Cobb County Water System Water Efficiency Program

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## Water Source Climate Update

This spring was a little wetter than normal, but also hotter. High volume rain events coupled with high temperatures increased evapotranspiration rates and created a significant soil moisture deficit. Allatoona's current pool elevation is 839 feet. The streamflow in most local water bodies that feed the Chattahoochee River are in the normal streamflow range, a few are below 25% of normal flow. Small areas of Georgia are currently in very dry status.

Visit <http://cobbwater.org/efficiency.htm> for information and resources to reduce outdoor water use this summer.

#### Water Restrictions Status: Non-Drought

**For Irrigation** – No watering between 10AM-4PM (No day of the week restrictions)

**For other outdoor uses** - (car washing, etc.)  
Odd/even schedule (No hourly restrictions)

Visit: <http://www.cobbcounty.org/images/documents/water/h2oquickguide.pdf> for more information on outdoor watering rules.

#### Rain Fall MAR-MAY (inches)

MAR: 4.05  
APR: 3.88  
MAY: 3.77  
2015 YTD: 20.83  
JAN-MAY AVG: 20.71  
SOIL MOISTURE: -8.19

You can view all of the entries for the 2015 H2O in HD video contest on the waterSmart YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/waterSmartPrograms>



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