



Waterwise advice for parks and open spaces





The images on the front cover, this page and opposite page were taken at Walton Hall Gardens, Warrington and have been used with the kind permission of Warrington Borough Council.

Playing our part to protect the environment

Water is a precious resource and we can all do our bit to help to protect water supplies now and for future generations.

Before water reaches your parks or open spaces we have to use large amounts of energy and resources to collect, clean and supply it to you, so any reduction in water usage has a positive effect on the environment. Also any wildlife dependent on wetland habitats will benefit from reduced demands on water resources.

As an individual with responsibility for managing public parks and open spaces, you may not have considered the amount of water you use in day-to-day maintenance operations. This booklet aims to provide useful information enabling you and your organisation to use water more efficiently and, in turn, helping to reduce your water resources budget.

FACT:

We use 70% more water than we did 30 years ago



Easy ways to water efficiency

Everyone with responsibility for maintaining parks and open spaces will know that keeping them in excellent condition is a top priority. Here are a few initial steps that you and your employees can take to help the flowerbeds in your public parks bloom better - for longer!



Bark mulch / gravel

A layer of bark mulch around plants will help retain soil moisture and reduce competition from weeds.

Water retention crystals

These can be added to compost for hanging baskets and containers to improve water retention and reduce the number of times baskets and containers need to be watered. The crystals soak up the water and release it slowly into the compost.

Watering times

Watering hanging baskets and containers during the summer is best carried out in the early morning or late afternoon. Water applied during hot weather will evaporate quickly in comparison to watering during cooler weather when more water will be absorbed into the soil.

Reuse green waste

Composting grass cuttings, weeds, hedge clippings and other green waste can produce good organic material for incorporating back into the soil. Compost helps to improve the soil structure and aids water retention.

Drought tolerant plants

Silver and grey foliage plants are best suited to hotter mediterranean climates and cope well in drought conditions. These suggested plants cope with very low levels of soil moisture:

- **Bedding plants:** alyssum, gazania, mesembryanthemum
- **Herbaceous:** sedum, verbascum, geranium, achillea, lavender
- **Shrubs and trees:** holly, tamarix, griselinia, broom, yucca, juniper, eucalyptus

Small steps to making big savings

These water efficiency measures can be put in place regardless of the type of park or open space you manage. Most can be implemented for little cost and will bring big reductions to your organisation's water consumption.

Raise awareness amongst your employees

Ensure your employees are aware of the importance of reducing wastage. It is vital to get the support of everyone working on your parks or open spaces to ensure they identify any areas where water is being wasted. If possible, appoint one of your employees to the role of 'water champion' and ask them to perform regular audits so that usage is constantly reviewed.

Undertake a water audit

Before you can begin to make water savings you need to know where and how water is being used throughout your park or open space. Carry out an audit to ensure you know every area of your site that uses water and consider how you may be able to reduce consumption.



Turn off taps and hosepipes

This sounds obvious but it pays to switch off all outside taps and hosepipes when they are not in use. A tap or hosepipe left running will waste at least five million litres of water each year. If possible fit self-closing taps and trigger nozzles to hosepipes to better direct the water to where it is needed and to eliminate wastage when left unattended. Sensors can also be fitted to taps which will turn the supply on and off automatically when required.

Insulate outside pipework

Prevent frost damage in winter by ensuring all outside pipework is lagged. A burst pipe not only wastes huge amounts of water but can also have a serious effect on your day-to-day operations.

Recycle

Consider reusing rainwater for activities such as watering. The best way to collect rainwater is from the roofs of your buildings – water butts are easy to install and store water for when you need to use it. When you consider that the average domestic property roof can collect over 90,000 litres of water each year, it makes sense to use this free supply to keep your flowers and plants in bloom.

Look out for leaks

Parks and gardens have very large water networks, much of which is hidden underground. Unless you suddenly discover pools of water on patches of grass above where your pipework is located, leaks can remain undiscovered for many years.

There are two options that can help you find out if you have a leak:

1: Monitor your water consumption

It may seem like a lot of work, but monitoring your water consumption on a regular basis will help to identify if you have a leak. The best way to do this is to choose a period of the day when your park's water use is minimal (ideally during the night when you may not be using any water at all). Record the water meter reading at the start and end of the period. If you discover that water is passing through the meter when there shouldn't be any water usage, this is a good indication that there is a leak on the water network.



FACT

A pipe left to leak water could cost you up to £5,000 in wasted water each year.

2: Undertake a leakage detection survey

There are numerous organisations that can carry out a leakage detection survey on your underground network to locate those hard-to-find leaks and repair them. You can find a list of independently approved plumbers and contractors by contacting the **Water Regulations Advisory Scheme** on **01495 248454** or via their website **www.wras.co.uk**. Alternatively, United Utilities offers this service (fees are payable) – to find out more call our **Total Pipework Solutions** team on **0845 050 2213**. A leakage detection audit takes about four hours (depending on the size of your park's underground network) and does not involve any disruptive work such as digging.

For further information

Contacting us

Bill enquiries

Textphone (like minicom)

Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 8am-5pm

Or write to us at:

United Utilities, PO Box 50, Warrington WA55 1AQ

0845 746 2255

0808 143 1195

Water supply enquiries

Sewer enquiries and problems

Textphone (like minicom)

Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 8am-6pm, Sun 8am-12noon

Or write to us at:

United Utilities, PO Box 453, Warrington WA55 1SE

0845 746 2200

0845 602 0406

0808 143 0295

Water efficiency advice

There is a section on our website which contains some simple hints and tips on becoming water efficient. You can access this information at **www.unitedutilities.com/waterwise**

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has a comprehensive series of web pages and publications covering a wide range of activities including saving water. Visit

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/savewater



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Envirowise

Envirowise is a UK-wide programme that offers businesses free, independent, confidential advice and support on practical ways to increase profits, minimise waste and reduce environmental impact. A specific section of the Envirowise website is dedicated to water use minimisation that contains a wealth of information and case studies on saving water. You can find this at

www.envirowise.gov.uk/water





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