

**Hannah Holm**  
**WATER LINES**  
**Free Press Weekly Columnist**

June 3, 2015

## **Water Lines: Don't water more than three days a week to preserve Colorado resources**



Here's a photo of an Apache Plume in my yard, which thrives on neglect in hot, dry locations.



After a warm, dry winter and a cool, wet spring, it seems that summer has finally arrived in western Colorado. Temperatures have edged above 90 degrees in Grand Junction, and the forecast shows plenty of sunshine.

At my house, that means the sprinkler system is finally on, and tomatoes and basil are in the ground. Now that we'll be relying on the irrigation system to keep the landscape alive, rather than just rain and occasional hose-hauling, it's a good time to review the basics of thrifty watering.

As a starting point, it's useful to look at rules established by Denver Water to prevent waste of their water supply, about half of which comes from the western side of the Continental Divide. While these rules are mandatory in Denver, they can also serve as useful minimum guidelines on this side of the hill:

- Water at dawn, when it's cool outside and less will evaporate. Denver prohibits watering between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- Water no more than three days per week. Even in Grand Junction in July, this is plenty to keep a lawn green.

- 
- Don't let water spray streets and sidewalks, which both wastes water and annoys passersby.

Further helpful tips include this easy test to see if your lawn needs water: try to push a screwdriver into it. If it goes in easily, it's fine; if it doesn't, water it. And don't water when it's raining.

For more advice in this vein, check out [www.denverwater.org/Conservation/TipsTools/Outdoor/WateringYourLawn](http://www.denverwater.org/Conservation/TipsTools/Outdoor/WateringYourLawn). All of these tips can apply to any kind of landscaping, and most can be applied with very little effort.

For longer-term landscape planning, it's worth noting that a plethora of experts keep saying that Colorado is getting warmer. This will make all plants thirstier going into the future. Longer, drier droughts, as well as wetter wet years, are likely. If your landscape features desert and drought-tolerant plants, you'll improve the chances that your yard can remain beautiful no matter what the climate dishes out.

The "Plant Select" program developed by the Denver Botanic Gardens and Colorado State University identifies plants particularly suited to Colorado environments. The program's website, <http://plantselect.org>, has lovely pictures paired with extensive information on each profiled plant's characteristics and cultivation requirements. Locally, Chelsea Nursery in Clifton (<http://chelseanursery.com>) specializes in native and drought-tolerant plants, and other nurseries also carry plants with the "plant select" label and other indications of plants' water needs.

Drought-proofing your landscape can protect your property investment, as well as head off feelings of guilt as you read about the California drought and dropping levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

This is part of a series of articles coordinated by the Water Center at Colorado Mesa University in cooperation with the Colorado and Gunnison Basin Roundtables to raise awareness about water needs, uses and policies in our region. To learn more about the basin roundtables and statewide water planning, and to let the roundtables know what you think, go to [www.coloradomesa.edu/WaterCenter](http://www.coloradomesa.edu/WaterCenter). You can also find the Water Center on at [www.Facebook.com/WaterCenter.CMU](https://www.facebook.com/WaterCenter.CMU) or [www.Twitter.com/WaterCenterCMU](https://www.twitter.com/WaterCenterCMU).

©2005 - 2015 [Swift Communications, Inc.](#)