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## City Seeking Ways To Conserve Water

WITH THE RAPID approach of summer and resultant near-doubling of water usage, city of Lubbock officials are encouraging home and business owners to help reduce water waste to a minimum.

Local landscape and horticulture experts agree that almost everyone tends to over-water their lawns and shrubs.

"In the state of Texas, people typically over-water by about 50 percent," according to Gaylyn Chapman, an education coordinator for the city's water utilities who also sits on the conservation committee for a professional irrigation organization.

"With the new rates that are coming up, it's going to be real important to know if you're wasting water or not," notes Sandra Offutt, a horticulturist and education coordinator for city water utilities.

Last year, the City Council adopted an ordinance that bans watering lawns during certain times of the day. The ordinance contains disincentives for those who refuse to comply with some simple conservation guidelines. Residents face up to a \$200 fine for watering between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

It is impossible to prescribe a common solution for all Lubbock homes, as weather, different sprinkler systems and the types of grass and soils will change how much water is needed, reports The A-J's Elliott Blackburn. But, he adds, there are some basic changes homeowners can make to save water.

Early morning is the best time of day to water yards, when nothing else in the home drains pressure from the irrigation system and the grass soaks up water before the sun dries the yard, according to landscape architect Paul Nash.

A fistful of moist soil will give residents clues on how often and how much to water their yards, Mr. Nash said.

Soil that crumbles apart or is more brittle has more sand. Most soil in the city is slightly sandy, which means that water quickly seeps through to the water table and out of reach, notes Thayne Montague, a Texas Tech assistant professor of horticulture.

For those who want more information, Texas A&M maintains a Web site that shows just how much water Lubbock grasses need each week. The Web address is: [texaset.tamu.edu](http://texaset.tamu.edu)

"We don't want to give the impression that we want Lubbock to be brown, because that's not it at all," Mr. Chapman said. "But you can water wisely and your grass will stay green."

If Lubbock home and business owners take time to learn how much water their sprinkler system is discharging each cycle, they can keep their lawns healthier with less water - a win-win situation for plants and people alike.