

Water, Water, Where Art Thou?

Last summer we experienced deluge after deluge: it felt like the rain would never end. This year, we are experiencing drought conditions, currently under Level 3. As our weather conditions become more and more unpredictable, we must implement measures that can help us withstand the erratic nature of climate. Here are some ways that we can reduce water consumption to reduce stress on our local water supply systems and our natural habitats.

1. Restore Your Lawn with Native Species

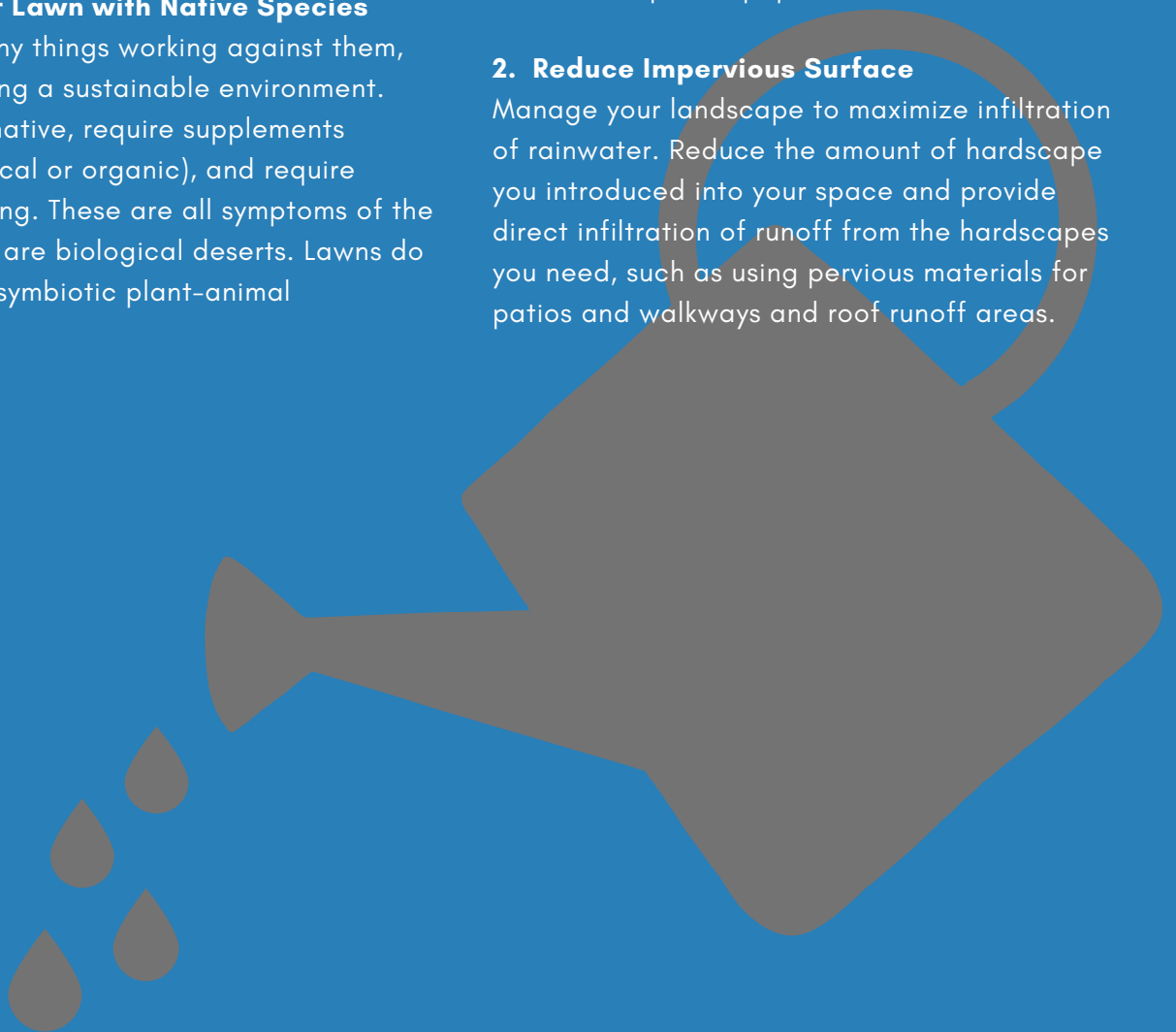
Lawns have many things working against them, as far as creating a sustainable environment. Lawns are not native, require supplements (whether chemical or organic), and require artificial watering. These are all symptoms of the fact that lawns are biological deserts. Lawns do not exhibit the symbiotic plant-animal

relationship that exists in nature. Any plant-animal interactions that do exist in lawn areas are generally resolved by more chemicals.

Review your landscape to see if there are areas you can convert back to native shrubs and trees. Alternatively, you can maintain that open landscape but convert your lawn to native grasses. These require less frequent mowing, allow more wildlife use, and help sustain our pollinator populations. Native plants have evolved in New England and so are more adept at withstanding its unpredictable climate, and generally require little to no artificial watering or fertilization. It also does not require herbicides or pesticides due to the assemblage of insects that will work in conjunction with each other to keep their populations in check.

2. Reduce Impervious Surface

Manage your landscape to maximize infiltration of rainwater. Reduce the amount of hardscape you introduced into your space and provide direct infiltration of runoff from the hardscapes you need, such as using pervious materials for patios and walkways and roof runoff areas.



3. Minimize Overall Water Use

Here are just a few ways you can minimize water usage in your house.

- Check plumbing and repair any leaks.
- Install water saving shower heads.
- Reduce water consumption by taking shorter showers and turning off the water when washing dishes, shaving, or brushing teeth.
- Install a 1-liter bottle, filled with water and 1-2 inches of sand in your toilet tank. This can save 5 or more gallons of water every day without harming your toilet.
- Run your dishwasher and washing machine only when full.
- If you need to water your lawn, schedule your watering during the cooler parts of the day so that most of the water is not lost to evaporation. Check the weather: if it is going to rain, forego the watering. If the grass springs back up when you walk on it, it does not need to be watered.
- Collect your roof run-off in rain barrels and

use that water to water your plants and lawn, or direct your gutters into your gardens to water them naturally.

- If you do have sprinklers, install a rain sensor and orient your sprinkler heads so you are not watering pavement or hard surfaces.
- Use a broom instead of your hose to clean your decks and walkways.

Whether you receive your water from town wells or your own personal well, fresh water is truly a finite resource that every living organism needs to survive. This fact is especially evident in the west where the land is collapsing from depletion of the aquifers that can no longer support the earth above them. Water over usage impacts agricultural production, impacts habitat viability, and affects the long-term survivability of all species. We must all do our part to ensure the long-term resilience of our water resources, both quantity and quality. Not just in times of drought, but always.

