

## Appendix 3.2 – Examples of Homeowners and Businesses Best Management

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### Examples of best management practices that can be distributed as educational material to homeowners and businesses

The following are simple landscape Best Management Practices (BMPs) that homeowners and businesses may adopt. They range from planning a water efficient landscape to daily and seasonal landscape management practices.

- The first step when planning a landscape should be to test the soil. A soil test will tell how to improve the soil quality so as to enhance nutrient uptake by plants, water infiltration and retention. Soil testing is available through the local county Extension office, some retail garden centers and reputable soil testing labs. To locate a Cooperative Extension county office, visit <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/mchenry/>.
- Explore alternative ways of obtaining water for irrigating plants, such as rainwater harvesting and storage, collecting air conditioner condensate, and rain gardens.
- Have an irrigation audit performed by a professional to maximize the efficiency of the existing irrigation system.
- When selecting plants for any landscape, choose plants that will thrive in the conditions of the particular landscape area they will be placed. Document the water and sunlight needs of the plants, and group plants with similar needs together in the landscape. Each group of plants can receive the amount of irrigation they require, and no surplus.

#### SOIL MODIFICATIONS

- Amendments, such as organic compost, added at the manufacturer's recommendations, will improve the physical and chemical properties of the soil. These amendments help the soil hold water and improve water and nutrient movement throughout the soil. This results in a healthier plant environment that requires less water, fertilizer, and pesticides and allows improved root development and fewer soil related problems during plant establishment.
- If soil amendments are not feasible, tilling clay soils will increase water infiltration and air space, and lead to quicker establishment and increased root growth.
- For trees and ornamentals, apply 2 inches (bark or compost) to 4 inches (pine straw) of mulch on the soil surface after planting. Mulch not only conserves moisture, it also maintains a uniform soil temperature and reduces weeds which compete for light, water and nutrients. The roots of established trees and shrubs extend two to three times their canopy spread, so mulch as large an area as possible to trap the maximum amount of moisture in the soil. Maintain an average mulch depth of 2 to 4 inches by adding 1 to 3 inches of additional mulch each year, depending on mulch type.

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### IRRIGATION

- Watch for moisture stress symptoms before deciding when to irrigate. An abnormal gray green color or obvious wilting is a good indicator that a broadleaf plant needs moisture. **Confirm** this by digging a small hole to see if the soil is wet, moist, or dry. Watering plants only when they require it will result in a deep, strong root system that preconditions the plant to tolerate dry periods.
- The best time to irrigate is at night or early morning (9 P.M. to 9 A.M) to conserve moisture and to reduce evaporative losses of water. Contact the local water provider for authorized watering times.
- When properly planted and managed, turfgrass is more resilient to periodic drought conditions than many people assume. Regardless of drought conditions, allow established turfgrass to dry and become stressed before applying irrigation. Stressed plants will explore deeper soil depths for moisture and nutrients. Periodically (as infrequently as every other growing season) aerate to improve water and air entry into the soil. To encourage deep rooting during periods of heat or drought stress, raise the mowing height to the upper limits of recommended mowing heights. Similarly, during periods of stress, use the lower end of nitrogen fertility recommendations and be sure other nutrients, like phosphorus and potassium, are adequate for turfgrass growth.
- To avoid wasting water, use a handheld hose, soaker hose or drip irrigation to water trees, shrubs and flowers, especially those planted on slopes. To avoid runoff, apply water gently and slowly at a rate the soil can absorb. When using sprinklers, make sure that the water reaches your lawn and planting beds, not the house, sidewalk, driveway or street. Retrofit your irrigation system with low volume emitters and a rain sensor that will prevent irrigation if moisture level is sufficient.