

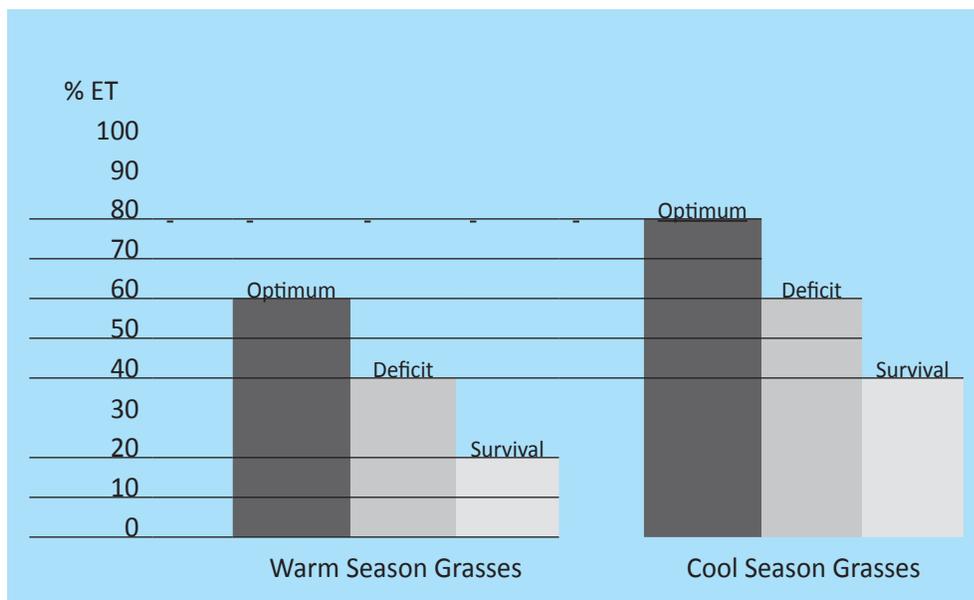
Water Use News & Notes

Reducing Turfgrass Water Consumption During Drought

FACT: According to figures provided by the California Department of Water Resources, of all surface water developed in California, 80% goes to agricultural uses and 20% goes to urban (commercial, public and residential) uses. Of the 20% that goes to urban use about half (or 10% of the total) goes towards outdoor landscape use. Using these facts if outdoor watering was decreased by 50% it would only reduce overall water consumption by 5%.

The governor has called on urban water users to reduce water consumption by 25 percent or more in some communities. There are many ways to reduce outdoor consumption including the use of more efficient irrigation systems and the installation of smart controllers. Once the irrigation system has been updated attention then can be turned towards other conservation methods which would include reducing irrigation to sustainable levels and the planting of more drought tolerant grasses. The combination of drought tolerant (warm-season) grasses coupled with reduced irrigation can yield water savings of 50 percent or more.

Warm Season Grasses include:
Bermudagrass, Buffalograss,



Turfgrass water requirements (as a % of ET) at optimum, deficit and survival levels of irrigation. (From University of California Publication 8395, Managing Turfgrass during Drought)

Kikuyugrass, St. Augustinegrass, Seashore paspalum and Zoysiagrass.

Cool Season Grasses include:
Tall Fescue, Dwarf Tall Fescue, Perennial Ryegrass, Fine Fescues (Creeping Red Fescue, Chewings Fescue, Hard Fescue), Kentucky

Bluegrass and Creeping Bentgrass.

The chart above shows the comparative water use rates between warm season and cool season grasses as well as the use rates of the grasses maintained at three levels of irrigation. The % ET represents the percentage of evapotranspiration relative to the three levels of irrigation for warm season and cool season grasses. The point of the chart is to illustrate both the water savings that warm season grasses offer and that both categories of grasses can survive under reduced levels of irrigation. For example, a



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cool season grass such as tall fescue (one of the more popular lawns in California) that is irrigated at an optimum level can be reduced to a deficit level with a 25% savings. Further reduction to a survival level results in a 50% savings. Even more water savings can be achieved with

warm season grasses. The point of this is to illustrate that turfgrasses need not be replaced in order to achieve significant water savings and that proper irrigation practices can yield significant water savings. What do reduced levels of irrigation look like on turfgrasses?

The pictures below show roughly what turfgrasses look like under optimum, deficit and survival levels of irrigation. Individual results can vary depending on irrigation system, climate and soil.



Warm Season Grasses Under Optimum Irrigation Levels



Warm Season Grasses Under Deficit Irrigation Levels



Warm Season Grasses Under Survival Irrigation Levels



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**Cool Season Grasses
Under Optimum
Irrigation Levels**



**Cool Season Grasses
Under Deficit
Irrigation Levels**

Watch for future

Water Use News & Notes:

Choosing Drought Tolerant Turfgrasses For California



**Cool Season Turfgrass
Under Survival
Irrigation Levels**

Reference: “Managing Turfgrasses during Drought”, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Publication 8395, 2009

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