Make an important difference by conserving water this September

Help us ‘Beat the Peak’ by keeping Lake Oswego’s daily water demand under 12 million gallons per day (mgd).

Peak water use on hot summer days can bring Lake Oswego’s water system to the brink of full capacity. In response, the City is holding a summer “Beat the Peak” campaign to reduce outdoor water use, especially lawn watering. Lake Oswego Water Treatment Plant Manager, Kari Duncan says, “We are asking our customers to help us keep daily water demand under 12 million gallons, a level where the system can reliably provide water, even with a pump out of service.”

The community can stay updated on daily peak water use by visiting lowaterconservation.com or viewing the giant water meter posted at the West End Building lawn on Kruse Way. Weekly peak use will be featured in The Lake Oswego Review as well.

Top five Ways to Beat the Peak

1) Check water meter for leaks inside the home: In Lake Oswego, leaks are being discovered in 1 out of 4 homes during water audits.
2) Check sprinkler system: Leaks or breaks can account for up to 25% of total water use.
3) Change outdoor nozzles: Don’t apply water faster than the ground can absorb it. Lower-volume nozzles will reduce the amount of water being applied.
4) Reduce irrigation time: People often over water by as much as 45%. We recommend watering your grass only three times per week and shrubs twice per week.
5) Let the City help: The City of Lake Oswego offers a number of services and free products to help you conserve water. Schedule a water audit at your home or business. It can result in an average 22% reduction in water use.

Stop by City Hall to get your free water-saving tools and visit lowaterconservation.com for additional tips and resources. Call Kevin McCaleb at 503-675-3747 to schedule a water audit.

Lake Oswego · Tigard Water Partnership
sharing water · connecting communities

The “Beat the Peak” pilot campaign is sponsored by the Lake Oswego Tigard Water Partnership, which holds water conservation as a top priority. The Partnership plans to upgrade and expand Lake Oswego’s existing water treatment plant, which was built in the 1960s, to serve both Lake Oswego and Tigard. Project Director Joel Komarek says, “Conservation is critical both now as well as after the new plant is online so we can defer any future expansions as long as possible.” For more information visit lotigardwater.org.

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Could you have a water leak?

“Let’s Talk Water” by Kevin McCaleb, Water Conservation Coordinator

Leaks are one of the biggest contributors to household water loss in the nation. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that household leaks account for a nationwide loss of over 1 trillion gallons of water annually.

That is enough to provide a year’s worth of water to Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami combined! In Lake Oswego one in four homes that have received a water audit have leaks. Most of the leaks have gone unnoticed for years. A full 52% of the City of Lake Oswego’s electricity costs for City operations are directly related to water treatment and distribution. So, when leaks go un repaired, money, water, and electricity are wasted.

Water from a leaking pipe can travel underground for considerable distances before surfacing. This can lead to some unintended consequences. For example, last year, an undetected leak at one Lake Oswego home flowed downhill to a neighbor’s pond and overflowed into his yard. When the leak was identified and repaired in the uphill home, the water level in the pond down the hill was greatly reduced, showing just how much water had been escaping.

Another Lake Oswego homeowner thought he had a large leak discovered in his water line. While springs do exist in certain areas of Lake Oswego and heavy rainfall can create an intermittent pool or pond in a yard where once there was none, it is always smart to check for leaks.

To find out if you have leaks or other problems, follow the tips below or contact Kevin McCaleb, Lake Oswego Water Conservation Specialist and schedule a water audit. This service is free and will help you identify leaks and other problems in and outside of your home that may be contributing to high water bills. You can reach Kevin at 503-675-3747.

How to check for leaks

• Examine your winter water usage
  It’s likely that a family of four has a serious leak problem if its winter water use exceeds 16 CCF or 12,000 gallons per 2 month cycle. Check your utility bill for usage information.
• Visual Inspection
  Look for dripping faucets and shower heads. Check outside for leaking hose bibs and sprinkler heads. Check irrigation valve boxes for standing water.

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How to check for leaks
(Continued from Page 1)

• **Check your water meter**
  Find a time when your family will be out of the house for about four hours. Make sure all water is turned off. Write down the numbers on your meter before you leave and again after you return. If the meter does not read exactly the same, you may have a leak.

• **Check low flow indicator**
  This is another way of checking for leaks. Start by stopping all water use inside and outside of your home (washing machines or dishwashers off, irrigation system off, etc.) Watch the indicator for a couple minutes. Look for any movement. Movement indicates water flowing through the meter and may indicate a leak.

• **Toilets**
  Listen for the sound of running water. This can mean a fill valve is malfunctioning. Follow these easy steps to test for a leak in the flapper (most common):
  - Pick up free dye tablets at City Hall, or use food coloring.
  - Drop the dye tablet or a few drops of food coloring in the toilet tank (be sure to put in enough to change the color of the water),
  - Do not use the toilet for at least an hour; if the color shows up in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak. Dye tablets can be picked up at the reception desk on the 3rd floor of City Hall.

• **Faucets and showerheads**
  A leaky faucet or a showerhead that drips at the rate of one drop per second can waste as much as 2,000 gallons of water per year. Check washers and gaskets for wear and replace if necessary.

The small red triangle or circle to the left of the needle on the meter face is the low flow indicator. That indicator will spin if any water is flowing through the meter.

Plant Du Jour: Crocus Speciosus

**Common name:** Autumn Crocus

**Family:** Iridaceae

**Life cycle:** Perennial bulb (Zone 4-9)

**Flowers:** Deep sky-blue (October)

**Size:** 6”

**Light:** sun

**Cultural notes:** Ordinary garden soil

The earliest of the autumn crocuses to flower, it has clear blue flowers rising on bare stems. The inside has yellow color in addition to the blue, but the flowers close in the afternoon, and are entirely blue in that state, which makes them stick out even more in the close-to-the-ground late-season garden scenery. As the weeks go on, the leaves turn golden yellow, blending with the changing fall foliage.

End of season reminders

**End of season conservation tips**

There are still some hot days ahead this summer, but the amount of water your plants and trees need is decreasing. Follow these simple tips to save money on your water bill and keep your plants in good health.

**Water less in September**

As the days get shorter, our plants need less water – their need for water is tied to hours and intensity of daylight rather than warm temperatures. Less light triggers winter dormancy. Dormancy is a natural phase in which a plant hibernates and it is critical to plant health.

In September, the days begin to shorten noticeably and nights become cooler. During September and October, plants and trees will begin to drop leaves to reduce water loss. Adding more water will not prevent this from happening, but it could delay the process long enough that it leads to plant damage. During these shorter days, a plant will begin to store energy deep inside its stem and root system. This stored energy will be released in the spring time to quickly produce buds, blooms and leaves.

**Reduce watering time in September**

Reduce water usage by 25% the first 2 weeks of September, drop another 25% the last 2 weeks. During the first two weeks of October reduce another 25% and suspend all watering by October 15th.

**Reduce the number of days you water rather than reducing the duration of watering.**

Even though less water is required, the level applied should remain the same to insure that a consistent amount of water reaches the depth of the root system.

Example:

If your current lawn watering schedule is 4 times per week for 20 minutes, then the first 2 weeks of September should be 3 times per week. The next 2 weeks reduce to 2 times per week and so on. Keep the watering times at 20 minutes until you turn the water off for the winter. By seasonally adjusting irrigation schedules, you will use less water and help maintain healthy plants that will be ready to bloom next spring.