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Water Conservation Tips

1. **Plant Early** - For any planned shrub or tree installations, get them in as early as possible this winter or early spring. Waiting any longer than this risks damage to your new plantings come summertime! Trees and shrubs installed this time of year are well set in before the summer's heat and are better rooted to resist drought stress.
2. **Mulch Deeply** - We normally recommend a 2" depth of mulch be maintained in all shrub and tree beds. This year, go deeper! Shoot for a 3-4" layer of mulch over the root systems of your shrubs and trees. This will greatly reduce the water needs of your plants, and should be done around every shrub or tree you care about.
3. **Make Sure to Fertilize Your Lawn This Spring** - Pre-emergent herbicides this February are super important to prevent tons of weeds from sprouting through your drought-weakened lawn. One good fertilization after the second mowing of your lawn this spring is still needed and useful to store food in the root system of your turf.
4. **Hydretain** - This non-toxic material grabs on to any and all available water when available to reduce evaporation, and when soaked into the soil, greatly improves moisture retention and water penetration through thick clay soils.
5. **Soil Moist and Expanded Shale** - For a long time we've used both of these products when we plant for our customers. Expanded shale does many useful things in the soil, but one of the nicest things it does is hold up to 38% of its weight in water! Soil Moist is non-toxic, grabs water like nobody's business, and will let that water release into the soil around it when the soil reaches a certain level of dryness. With anything new you plant, use both of these products, but be extra generous with the Soil Moist this year.
6. **Fix Your Sprinklers** - Run a sprinkler audit! Have Covington's or another good irrigation professional do the audit if you're not sure what to do. Replace leaking heads, fix cracked lines, clean out clogged sprayers, and make sure your sprinklers are set on the PROPER watering cycles - heavy, infrequent waterings - that really help the water go down and not into the storm drains.

Drip systems are outstanding for efficient use of water, so consider having Covington's install a professional drip system. Contact Covington's Irrigation Services (LI21683) at 972-475-5888 Ext. 5.

7. **Go Organic and Use Mycorrhizae** - Mycorrhizae are a type of symbiotic soil-borne fungus that colonizes the roots of your plants. In exchange for a small amount of food from the host plant, these fungal strands basically expand the root system of your plants by an order of magnitude, and make it easier for the plant to take up hard-to-absorb nutrients. It's a great relationship that benefits everything involved, and soil rich in mycorrhizal fungi is a soil that helps plants resist drought stress. It's not a little difference - it's a huge difference. Mycorrhizae will only thrive in a soil that's free of high-salt conventional fertilizers - fertilize all of your beds with a good organic fertilizer with Mycorrhizae to inoculate with this fungus organically for the best results. Organic fertilization will also encourage sturdier, slower growth than conventional fertilizer products will, but you'll have healthy looking plants without weak "surge" growth that's easily burned.