

Grouping Plants into Hydrozones

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Grouping plants into hydrozones is an approach to irrigation and planting design where plants with similar water needs are grouped together.

Ideally, each zone of the irrigation system will supply plants with the same water needs with the appropriate amount of water.

Turf areas and planting beds have different water needs and should be zoned separately. [Trees and shrubs](#) generally need deep watering less frequently while [turfgrass needs](#) more frequent watering.

Unfortunately, many irrigation systems are set to water all plants in the landscape at the same time and rate. This approach is wasteful of water.

- Measure water use of turf and irrigate accordingly
- Do the research and know water use needs of landscape plants
- Use native [water-wise or adapted plants](#)
- Consider planting highest water use "oasis" species closest to the house

Implementing Hydrozoning Into the Landscape Plan

When creating a new landscape plan, be sure to account for plant water needs. Information on water needs of adapted water-wise plants can be found through the [Cooperative Extension Service](#) offices and knowledgeable staff at reputable garden centers and nurseries.

Once water needs of plants are identified, categories such as Routine Irrigation, Reduced Irrigation, Limited Irrigation and No Irrigation can be created. Label these zones with specific water requirements such as Routine Irrigation needs watering every 2-4 days and Limited Irrigation needs watering only during dry spells once plants are established.

These categories can be identified as roughly drawn [bubble areas on the plan](#). When planning for hydrozones also keep in mind the uses of the spaces to be created. A lush "oasis" or higher water use zone can be created closer to the house while a more natural area with low water needs could be placed at the back or edges of the property.

[Retrofitting](#) an existing irrigation system can be more difficult and professional consultation may be necessary.



This yard has multiple hydrozones that allow the owner to reduce water use while still enjoying an attractive landscape. Photo credit: Larry Sagers