

## Living with Drought

Due to lower than normal rainfall for the last eight years and reduced allocations from the Town of Gilbert's water providers, the Town declared a **Stage 1 Drought** in 2003. Under this status, the Town is required to reduce its water use by 5 percent. We are not alone; many of the other cities in the valley have declared drought status and have adopted drought plans.

This current drought has now surpassed the worst in the last 110 years of recordkeeping. Beyond the written record, tree ring research reveals that 20 to 30 year droughts were not uncommon over the past 1,000 years in the major watersheds serving the Town of Gilbert and surrounding municipalities.

Although the Town of Gilbert has adequate water supplies, it has none to waste. During this current drought, Gilbert has been able to manage its available water resources to meet the community's water demands. However, this record-setting drought is a warning. Given that we could experience another 10 or more years of drought, we all need to become more aware about the facts of drought and what the future possibilities and impacts from drought could be.

Drought requires Gilbert us to take action, as a community and as individuals. Together, businesses, homeowner associations and residents can do their part to use water wisely and ensure an adequate water supply for today and future generations. Water conservation isn't a choice, it's a responsibility.

For the second year the Town of Gilbert Water Conservation Department would like to encourage you to consider limiting, or forgoing, overseeding of your turf areas. Last year many properties chose to voluntarily skip overseeding. Those properties saved millions of gallons of water and thousands of dollars. By not overseeding, your community can realize significant benefits, not only reduced water costs but lower costs associated with preparation and maintenance of winter lawns. Savings can be used to add amenities to your community. You will also demonstrate your community's leadership with their responsible approach towards our water supply.

Before making your decision, consider the following reasons for not overseeding:

- **Save money** – The cost of seed, water and labor. Turf uses 60 percent more water per square foot than a low-water-use landscape.
- **Prevent difficulties** – The overseeding process (scalping, verticutting or power raking) can be very stressful on a Bermuda lawn. Most turf experts recommend allowing your lawn areas to 'rest' every three years. This allows the Bermuda to regain its vigor.
- **Save water** – Ryegrass seed needs copious amounts of water to germinate. Once established, ryegrass needs water every three to five days, whereas dormant Bermuda grass needs water only once a month.
- **Save frustration** – Seed germination problems, fertilizer problems, disease problems, and irrigation problems are all possibilities when planting a winter lawn.
- **Set an example** – *We live in a desert and water is our most precious natural resource.*

I hope you will seriously consider our suggestion. Homeowner associations, non-residential and multi-family water customers who choose not to plant a winter lawn will be eligible to enter the Water Wise Recognition Program and receive acknowledgment from the Town of Gilbert.

Additionally, our staff is available to work with you to review onsite water use, identify water saving options, and construct a cost/benefit analysis. I would be happy to meet with you, the property owner or management company to discuss your water use and to show you some potential money saving techniques. I can be reached at (480) 503-6896 or [cathyr@ci.gilbert.az.us](mailto:cathyr@ci.gilbert.az.us) to schedule an appointment.

Thank you for supporting water conservation. *"We're not asking you to save the World, Just a Little Water"*

Sincerely,



Cathy Rymer  
Water Conservation Specialist

