



## The Green-Friendly Garden: Conserving Water

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The first day of summer is June 21. Longer day length means more time in which plants transpire, losing water through their stomata (tiny openings in their leaves). Horticulturists recommend watering garden plants slowly and deeply in the morning hours to keep plants hydrated. Morning is not only the optimum time for plants to take up water, but watering then will also conserve precious water resources.

Did you know that only 1 percent of the water found on Earth is drinkable? Next time you cut into a papaya fruit, try this demonstration for your keiki. Cut the papaya into four equal pieces. One of these represents land, and the other three represent all the water on planet earth. Put the "land" piece aside. Explain that three-fourths of the Earth is covered with water, but most of it is salt water found in oceans. Take one of the three "water" parts and cut off 1/8 of it. This small slice of papaya represents fresh water. Next, cut this piece into three equal parts. Two of these pieces represent frozen water, unavailable for our use. Only one of these small pieces represents the fresh, liquid water that we need to live. Conserving fresh water is very important, because without water living things could not survive.

At the CTAHR Urban Garden Center in Pearl City, O'ahu Master Gardeners are practicing water-wise gardening. Soaker hoses, widely available at local garden centers, laid around newly planted native vines in the

Ecosystem Garden have proved to cut back on the amount of watering needed each week. The newly planted vines are vigorously growing and receive water only once a week. Spacing the soaker hoses 3–4 inches from the base of the plants encourage new root systems to grow towards the drip line. Three inches of mulch placed on top on the soaker hose and around the base of the plants helps prevent water from evaporating.

Planting a native plant, laying soaker hoses that drip water, and adding a thick layer of mulch are the key ingredients to our "green" garden successes. Water-wise practices are not only for the garden. Once a glass of water sits by your bedside table until morning, do you pour the water down the sink? Try adding that water to a house plant or a plant in your garden.

Ask your keiki for ideas on saving water. They may surprise you. Share your ideas with the O'ahu Master Gardeners by calling 808-453-6055 or e-mailing mg@ctahr.hawaii.edu to add your ideas to our list of water-wise gardening ideas.

\*CTAHR Popular Press articles were written to appear as newspaper columns and therefore are of necessity brief and sometimes simplified treatments of their subjects. For more detailed information resources, visit [www.ctahr.hawaii.edu](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu).

### Do you have a gardening question?

Contact a CTAHR Cooperative Extension Service or Master Gardener program resource.

**East Hawai'i:** (9 a.m.–noon, Tu, Th) 981-5199, himga@hawaii.edu

**Kaua'i:** (1–4:30 p.m., M–F) 274-3475, rebesu@hawaii.edu

**Maui:** (9 a.m.–noon, M, Tu, Th) 244-3242 ext. 228, MauiMG@ctahr.hawaii.edu

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