



Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District

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Dry Season and Droughts: What They Mean for

You By Kye Chapman

We've finally made it through this brutal summer and cooler, drier weather is finally here! While it feels wonderful outside, it is important to remember that we are still in a historic, phase III extreme drought. Reservoirs in Hillsborough County and surrounding areas are at half capacity, and we still have 8 months of dry season ahead of us, so Southwest Florida Water Management District is increasing water restrictions through March 31, 2027.

As part of these restrictions, irrigation can only happen once a week between 8pm and 4am. As we get further into dry season, you may notice your lawn drying out and turning brown. For most turfgrasses in Florida, this is actually their normal process of going dormant during cold or dry stress. As this dormancy happens, you may worry about what your [homeowner association \(HOA\)](#) will think, but thankfully there are local laws and ordinances protecting you during drought. Outdoor water use accounts for over 50% of water used in Florida, so it is important to follow proper watering restrictions to protect our water supply.

Under the Phase III Water Restriction ([40D-21.641 \(7\)\(g\)](#)) No person or entity, for example, a homeowner association or property manager, shall enforce any deed restrictions or other community standards which are inconsistent with the Water Shortage declaration. This specifically includes that the person or entity responsible for enforcement will suspend any requirement to replace plant material to meet aesthetic standards. [Florida Statute 373.62](#) says that any person who purchases and installs an automatic irrigation system must install, maintain and operate a calibrated device which is designed to detect rainfall and override/interrupt operation of the irrigation system during periods of sufficient rainfall.

The above water restrictions also apply to private wells. Microirrigation and hand watering can occur on any day, but only between 6pm and 8am when evaporation is down. For more information, visit WaterMatters.org.

