

Retail Practices for Nurseries, Greenhouses and Garden Centers

Description

Retail businesses should operate in a manner to maintain the health of plants, to conserve water and to promote water conservation and water resource protection to the general public.

Basic Practice Guidelines

1. Group plants together that have the same water requirements (i.e., use hydrozoning) and water accordingly.
2. Schedule irrigation according to plant needs and growing-media water depletion. Watering requirements will vary and should be adjusted based on time of year, weather, methods of storage and type and stage of the plant (e.g., dormancy). Plants need less water during cool, rainy weather than during hot, dry, windy weather.
3. Properly educate retail employees on the water needs of various plants so that both over-watering and under-watering are minimized.
4. Upgrade irrigation equipment to improve application efficiency.
5. Promptly repair leaking irrigation equipment—including hoses, bibs and couplings. Don't leave hoses running on the ground.
6. Implement closed irrigation techniques (water recycling system) whenever water rights and site constraints allow. Treat for water-transmitted root disease organisms before using recycled water for irrigation.
7. Plug sprinkler heads that are not watering plants, keep sprinkler heads as low as possible to the plants and use larger water droplet size to reduce irrigation time. Preventing water from being wasted on pathways not only saves money, but also reinforces water-wise practices to the visiting public.
8. Avoid introduction of plant diseases by procuring disease-free plant material and isolating, inspecting and treating newly arrived plants.
9. Implement cultural practices that create an unfavorable environment for disease development. For example, avoiding overhead irrigation and frequent, light watering can reduce spot diseases.
10. Protect plant vigor and pest tolerance by supplying adequate light, nutrients and water.

BMP Type			
Design			
Installation			
Maintenance/Operation		X	
Green Industry Relevance			
ASLA		GCC	X
ALCC		ISA	X
CALCP		RMSGGA	X
CGGA	X	WFC	X
CNA	X		

11. Offer plants with lower water requirements or those adapted to local conditions and appropriately identify them in displays.
12. Be properly educated about the water requirements of plants when communicating with the public and recommend plants with lower water requirements or those native to local climate conditions. Don't be fooled by marketing campaigns touting low-water usage or native plants without the data to back up their claims.
13. Follow proper storage and handling requirements for pesticides and fertilizers. In cases of containers breaking or leaking, follow manufacture's directions for cleanup and disposal. See the *Pesticide, Fertilizer and Other Chemical Storage, Handling and Disposal BMP* for additional guidelines.
14. In the event of broken bags of compost and soil, sweep up spilled materials and dispose of them rather than washing them into the gutter.
15. Consider establishing displays, signage, information brochure distribution shelves, or pilot-demonstration test sites for the purposes of effectively educating the public on water conservation and water quality protection practices.

Regional or Industry Considerations/Adaptations

None identified.

Key References

- Colorado Nursery Association. 2001. *Colorado Certified Nursery Professionals Manual*. Denver, CO: CNA.
- Cranshaw, W. 1999. *Landscape and Nursery Insect Management Recommendation Guide for Turf Grass, Shade Trees and Shrubs*. Ft. Collins, CO: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.
- Davidson, H., R. Mecklenburg, and C. Peterson. 1999. *Nursery Management: Administration and Culture*. 4th Edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Panter, K.L., S.E. Newman, and R.M. Waskom. 1998. *Pollution Prevention in Colorado Greenhouses*. XCM-206 (www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/xcm206.pdf). Ft. Collins, CO: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.