Watering trees, proper pruning, and responsible pest control have long been among the basic tenets of good urban forestry. But with the demand for water soaring and supplies shrinking, it is essential that property owners and municipalities find new ways to conserve water while at the same time maintaining healthy trees and other vegetation.

"Water, water everywhere," wrote the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In fact, 70 percent of the world's surface is covered with it. "But not a drop to drink," he continued.

While our current situation is not quite that dire, it is worth noting that only about 1 percent of all Earth's water is fresh water. Much of it is also unevenly distributed to places like the Rocky Mountains or Great Lakes. Add our growing population, industry's insatiable appetite, recurring droughts, receding water tables, pollution, and global climate change, and the message should be clear that water conservation is now more important than ever.

An excellent opportunity for conserving water is right in everyone's backyards. During the summer months, outdoor water commonly accounts for 40-60 percent of residential water consumption in the western United States and as much as 80 percent on hot, dry days. In the East, the statistics can be just as dramatic when the rains stop and summer days heat up.

With so much water being used on lawns, gardens, and shade trees, landscape watering becomes an obvious target for saving water. The good news is that there are proven ways to conserve water without turning the yard into a concrete slab. It can be done through the purposeful selection of trees, shrubs, and flowers, careful design or the modification of existing landscaping, and the installation of water-saving irrigation devices.

For the home, business, church, school, or other private or public place, the suggestions in this bulletin can save 40 percent or more of the water you are now using to beautify your home and community.